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A SIMPLETON.

A Story of the Day.

BY CHARLES READE.

[At the Author's particular request this story is not illustrated.]

CHAPTER XXIII.

WHEN Falcon went, luck seemed to desert their claim: day after day went by without a find; and the discoveries on every side made this the more mortifying.

By this time the diggers at Bulteel's pan were as miscellaneous as the audience at Drury Lane Theatre, only mixed more closely; the gallery folk and the stalls worked cheek by jowl. Here a gentleman with an affected lisp, and close by an honest fellow, who could not deliver a sentence without an oath, or some still more horrible expletive that meant nothing at all in reality, but served to make respectable flesh creep: interspersed with these, Hottentots, Kafirs, and wild blue blacks gaily clad in an ostrich feather, a scarlet ribbon, and a Tower musket, sold them by some good Christian for a modern rifle.

On one side of Staines were two swells, who lay on their backs and talked opera half the day; but seldom condescended to work without finding a diamond of some sort.

After a week's deplorable luck, his Kafir boy struck work on account of a sore in his leg; the sore was due to a very common

cause, the burning sand had got into a scratch, and festered. Staines, out of humanity, examined the sore; and proceeding to clean it, before bandaging, out popped a diamond worth forty pounds, even in the depreciated market. Staines quietly pocketed it, and bandaged the leg. This made him suspect his blacks had been cheating him on a large scale, and he borrowed Hans Bulteel to watch them, giving him a third, with which Master Hans was mightily pleased. But they could only find small diamonds, and by this time prodigious slices of luck were reported on every side. Kafirs and Boers, that would not dig, but traversed large tracts of ground when the sun was shining, stumbled over diamonds. One Boer pointed to a wagon and eight oxen, and said that one lucky glance on the sand had given him that lot: but day after day Staines returned home, covered with dust, and almost blinded, yet with little or nothing to show for it.

One evening, complaining of his change of luck, Bulteel quietly proposed to him migration. 'I am going,' said he, resignedly: 'and you can come with me.'

' You leave your farm, sir? Why, they pay you ten shillings a claim, and that must make a large return; the pan is fifteen acres.'

' Yes, mine vriend,' said the poor Hollander, ' they pay; but deir money it cost too dear. Vere is mine peace? Dis farm is six thousand acres. If de cursed diamonds was farther off, den it vas vell. Bud dey are too near. Once I could smoke in peace, and sleep. Now diamonds is come, and sleep and peace is fled. Dere is four thousand tents, and to each tent a dawg; dat dawg bark at four thousand oder dawgs all night, and dey bark at him and at each oder. Den de masters of de dawgs dey get angry, and fire four thousand pistole at de four thousand dawgs, and make my bed shake wid the trembling of mine vrow. My vamily is with diamonds infected. Dey vill not work. Dey takes long walks, and always looks on de ground. Mine childre shall be hump-backed, round-shouldered, looking down for diamonds. Dey shall forget Gott. He is on high: dere eyes are always on de earth. De diggers found a diamond in mine plaster of mine wall of mine house. Dat plaster vas limestone; it come from dose kopjes de good Gott made in His anger against man for his wickedness. I zay so. Dey not believe me. Dey tink dem abominable stones grow in mine house and break out in mine plaster like de measles: dey vaunt to dig in mine wall, in mine garden, in mine floor. One day dey shall dig in mine body. I vill go. Better I love peace, dan money. Here is English company make me offer for mine varm. Dey forgive de diamonds.'

' You have not accepted it?' cried Staines, in alarm.

' No, but I vill. I have said I

shall tink of it. Dat is my vay. So I say yah.'

' An English company? They will cheat you without mercy. No, they shall not, though, for I will have a hand in the bargain.'

He set to work directly, added up the value of the claims, at ten shillings per month, and amazed the poor Hollander by his statement of the value of those fifteen acres, capitalized.

And, to close this part of the subject, the obnoxious diamonds obtained him three times as much money as his father had paid for the whole six thousand acres.

The company got a great bargain, but Bulteel received what for him was a large capital, and settling far to the south, this lineal descendant of ' le philosophe sans le savoir ' carried his godliness, his cleanliness, and his love of peace, out of the turmoil, and was happier than ever, since now he could compare his placid existence with one year of noise and clamour.

But long before this, events more pertinent to my story had occurred.

One day, a Hottentot came into Bulteel's farm, and went about among the diggers, till he found Staines. The Hottentot was one employed at Dale's Kloof, and knew him. He brought Staines a letter.

Staines opened the letter, and another letter fell out; it was directed to ' Reginald Falcon, Esq.'

' Why,' thought Staines, ' what a time this letter must have been on the road. So much for private messengers.'

The letter ran thus:—

' DEAR SIR,

' This leaves us all well at Dale's Kloof, as I hope it shall find you and my dear husband at the diggings. Sir, I am happy to

say I have good news for you. When you got well by God's mercy, I wrote to the doctor at the hospital, and told him so. I wrote unbeknown to you, because I had promised him. Well, sir, he has written back to say you have two hundred pounds in money, and a great many valuable things, such as gold and jewels. They are all at the old bank in Cape Town, and the cashier has seen you, and will deliver them on demand. So that is the first of my good news, because it is good news to you. But, dear sir, I think you will be pleased to hear that Dick and I are thriving wonderfully, thanks to your good advice. The wooden house it is built, and a great oven. But, sir, the traffic came almost before we were ready, and the miners that call here, coming and going, every day, you would not believe, likewise waggons and carts. It is all bustle, morn till night, and dear Reginald will never be dull here now. I hope you will be so kind as tell him so, for I do long to see you both home again.

'Sir, we are making our fortunes. The grain we could not sell at a fair price, we sell as bread, and higher than in England ever so much. Tea and coffee the same, and the poor things praise us, too, for being so moderate. So, sir, Dick bids me say that we owe this to you, and if so be you are minded to share, why nothing would please us better. Head-piece is always worth money in these parts; and if it hurts your pride to be our partner without money, why you can throw in what you have at the Cape, though we don't ask that. And, besides, we are offered diamonds a bargain every day, but are afraid to deal, for want of experience; but if you were in it with us, you must know them well by this time, and we

might turn many a good pound that way. Dear sir, I hope you will not be offended, but I think this is the only way we have, Dick and I, to show our respect and good-will.

'Dear sir, digging is hard work, and not fit for you and Reginald, that are gentlemen, amongst a lot of rough fellows, that their talk makes my hair stand on end, though I daresay they mean no harm.

'Your bedroom is always ready, sir. I never will let it to any of them, hoping now to see you every day. You that know everything, can guess how I long to see you both home. My very good fortune seems not to taste like good fortune, without those I love and esteem to share it. I shall count how many days this letter will take to reach you, and then I shall pray for your safety harder than ever, till the blessed hour comes when I see my husband, and my good friend, never to part again, I hope, in this world.

'I am, Sir,

'Your dutiful servant and friend,
'PHEBE DALE.'

'P.S. There is regular travelling to and from Cape Town, and a Post now to Pniel, but I thought it surest to send by one that knows you.'

Staines read this letter with great satisfaction. He remembered his two hundred pounds, but his gold and jewels puzzled him. Still it was good news, and pleased him not a little. Phoebe's good fortune gratified him too, and her offer of a partnership, especially in the purchase of diamonds from returning diggers. He saw a large fortune to be made; and, wearied and disgusted with recent ill-luck, blear-eyed and almost blinded with sorting

in the blazing sun, he resolved to go at once to Dale's Kloof. Should Mrs. Falcon be gone to England with the diamonds, he would stay there, and Rosa should come out to him, or he would go and fetch her.

He went home, and washed himself, and told Bulteel he had had good news, and should leave the diggings at once. He gave him up the claim, and told him to sell it by auction. It was worth two hundred pounds still. The good people sympathized with him, and he started within an hour. He left his pickaxe and shovel, and took only his double rifle, an admirable one, some ammunition, including conical bullets and projectile shells given him by Falcon, a bag full of carbuncles and garnets he had collected for Ucatella; a few small diamonds, and one hundred pounds — all that remained to him, since he had been paying wages and other things for months, and had given Falcon twenty for his journey.

He rode away, and soon put twenty miles between him and the diggings.

He came to a little store that bought diamonds and sold groceries and tobacco. He haltered his horse to a hook, and went in. He offered a small diamond for sale. The master was out, and the assistant said there was a glut of these small stones, he did not care to give money for it.

'Well, give me three dozen cigars.'

While they were chaffering, in walked a Hottentot, and said, 'Will you buy this?' and laid a clear, glittering stone on the counter, as large as a walnut.

'Yes,' said the young man. 'How much?'

'Two hundred pounds.'

'Two hundred pounds! Let us look at it.' he examined it,

and said he thought it was a diamond, but these large stones were so deceitful, he dared not give two hundred pounds. 'Come again in an hour,' said he; 'then the master will be in.'

'No,' said the Hottentot, quietly, and walked out.

Staines, who had been literally perspiring at the sight of this stone, mounted his horse and followed the man. When he came up to him, he asked leave to examine the gem. The Hottentot quietly assented.

Staines looked at it all over. It had a rough side and a polished side, and the latter was of amazing softness and lustre. It made him tremble. He said, 'Look here, I have only one hundred pounds in my pocket.'

The Hottentot shook his head.

'But if you will go back with me to Bulteel's farm, I'll borrow the other hundred.'

The Hottentot declined, and told him he could get four hundred pounds for it by going back to Pniel. 'But,' said he, 'my face is turned so; and when Squat turn his face so, he going home. Not can bear go the other way then,' and he held out his hand for the diamond.

Staines gave it him, and was in despair at seeing such a prize so near, yet leaving him.

He made another effort. 'Well, but,' said he, 'how far are you going this way?'

'Ten days.'

'Why, so am I. Come with me to Dale's Kloof, and I will give the other hundred. See, I am in earnest, for here is one hundred, at all events.'

Staines made this proposal, trembling with excitement. To his surprise and joy, the Hottentot assented, though with an air of indifference; and, on these terms, they became fellow travellers, and

Staines gave him a cigar. They went on side by side, and halted for the night forty miles from Bulteel's farm.

They slept in a Boer's outhouse, and the ruse was civil, and lent Staines a jackal's skin. In the morning he bought it, for a diamond, a carbuncle, and a score of garnets; for a horrible thought had occurred to him, if they stopped at any place where miners were, somebody might buy the great diamond over his head. This fear, and others, grew on him, and, with all his philosophy, he went on thorns, and was the slave of the diamond.

He resolved to keep his Hottentot all to himself if possible. He shot a springbok that crossed the road, and they roasted a portion of the animal, and the Hottentot carried some on with him.

Seeing he admired the rifle, Staines offered it him for the odd hundred pounds: but, though Squat's eye glittered a moment, he declined.

Finding that they met too many diggers and carts, Staines asked his Hottentot was there no nearer way to reach that star, pointing to one he knew was just over Dale's Kloof.

Oh yes, he knew a nearer way, where there were trees, and shade, and grass, and many beasts to shoot.

'Let us take that way,' said Staines.

The Hottentot, ductile as wax, except about the price of the diamond, assented calmly; and next day they diverged, and got into forest scenery, and their eyes were soothed with green glades here and there, wherever the clumps of trees sheltered the grass from the panting sun. Animals abounded, and were tame; Staines, an excellent marksman, shot the Hottentot his supper without any trouble.

Sleeping in the wood, with not a creature near but Squat, a sombre thought struck Staines. Suppose this Hottentot should assassinate him for his money, who would ever know? The thought was horrible, and he awoke with a start ten times that night. The Hottentot slept like a stone, and never feared for his own life and precious booty; Staines was compelled to own to himself he had less faith in human goodness than the savage had. He said to himself, 'He is my superior. He is the master of this dreadful diamond, and I am its slave.'

Next day they went on till noon, and then they halted at a really delightful spot; a silver kloof ran along a bottom, and there was a little clump of three acacia trees that lowered their long tresses, pining for the stream, and sometimes getting a cool grateful kiss from it when the water was high.

They haltered the horse, bathed in the stream, and lay luxurious under the acacias. All was delicious languor and enjoyment of life.

The Hottentot made a fire, and burnt the remains of a little sort of kangaroo Staines had shot him the evening before; but it did not suffice his maw, and, looking about him, he saw three elands leisurely feeding about three hundred yards off. They were cropping the rich herbage close to the shelter of a wood.

The Hottentot suggested that this was an excellent opportunity. He would borrow Staines's rifle, steal into the wood, crawl on his belly close up to them, and send a bullet through one.

Staines did not relish the proposal. He had seen the savage's eye repeatedly gloat on the rifle, and was not without hopes he

might even yet relent, and give the great diamond for the hundred pounds and this rifle; and he was so demoralized by the diamond, and filled with suspicions, that he feared the savage, if he once had the rifle in his possession, might cut, and be seen no more, in which case he, Staines, still the slave of the diamond, might hang himself on the nearest tree, and so secure his Rosa the insurance money, at all events. In short, he had really diamond on the brain.

He hem'd and haw'd a little at Squat's proposal, and then got out of it by saying, 'That is not necessary. I can shoot it from here.'

'It is too far,' objected Blacky.

'Too far! This is an Enfield rifle. I could kill the poor beast at three times that distance.'

Blacky was amazed. 'An Enfield rifle,' said he, in the soft musical murmur of his tribe, which is the one charm of the poor Hottentot; 'and shoot three times so far.'

'Yes,' said Christopher. Then, seeing his companion's hesitation, he conceived a hope. 'If I kill that eland from here, will you give me the diamond, for my horse and the wonderful rifle—no Hottentot has such a rifle.'

Squat became cold directly. 'The price of the diamond is two hundred pounds.'

Staines groaned with disappointment, and thought to himself, with rage, 'Anybody but me would club the rifle, give the obstinate black brute a stunner, and take the diamond—God forgive me!'

Says the Hottentot, cunningly, 'I can't think so far as white man. Let me see the eland dead, and then I shall know how far the rifle shoot.'

'Very well,' said Staines. But he felt sure the savage only wanted his meal, and would never part

with the diamond, except for the odd money.

However, he loaded his left barrel with one of the explosive projectiles Falcon had given him; it was a little fulminating shell with a steel point. It was with this barrel he had shot the murcat overnight, and he had found he shot better with this barrel than the other. He loaded his left barrel then, saw the powder well up, capped it, and cut away a strip of the acacia with his knife to see clear, and, lying down in volunteer fashion, elbow on ground, drew his bead steadily on an eland who presented him her-broadside, her back being turned to the wood. The sun shone on her soft coat, and never was a fairer mark, the sportsman's deadly eye being in the cool shade, the animal in the sun.

He aimed long and steadily. But, just as he was about to pull the trigger, Mind interposed, and he lowered the deadly weapon. 'Poor creature!' he said, 'I am going to take her life—for what? for a single meal. She is as big as a pony; and I am to lay her carcass on the plain, that we may eat two pounds of it. This is how the weasel kills the rabbit; sucks an ounce of blood for his food, and wastes the rest. So the demoralized sheep-dog tears out the poor creature's kidneys, and wastes the rest. Man, armed by science with such powers of slaying, should be less egotistical than weasels and perverted sheep-dogs. I will not kill her. I will not lay that beautiful body of hers low, and glaze those tender, loving eyes that never gleamed with hate or rage at man, and fix those innocent jaws that never bit the life out of anything, not even of the grass she feeds on, and does it more good than harm. Feed on, poor innocent. And you be-

blanked ; you and your diamond, that I begin to wish I had never seen ; for it would corrupt an angel.'

Squat understood one word in ten, but he managed to reply. 'This is nonsense-talk,' said he, gravely. 'The life is no bigger in that than in the mureat you shot last shoot.'

'No more it is,' said Staines. 'I am a fool. It is come to this, then, Kafirs teach us theology, and Hottentots morality. I bow to my intellectual superior. I'll shoot the eland.' He raised his rifle again.

'No, no, no, no, no, no,' murmured the Hottentot, in a sweet voice scarcely audible, yet so keen in its entreaty, that Staines turned hastily round to look at him. His face was ashy, his teeth chattering, his limbs shaking. Before Staines could ask him what was the matter, he pointed through an aperture of the acacias into the wood hard by the elands. Staines looked, and saw what seemed to him a very long dog, or some such animal, crawling from tree to tree. He did not at all share the terror of his companion, nor understand it. But a terrible explanation followed. This creature, having got to the skirt of the wood, expanded, by some strange magic, to an incredible size, and sprang into the open, with a growl, a mighty lion; he seemed to ricochet from the ground, so immense was his second bound, that carried him to the eland, and he struck her one blow on the head with his terrible paw, and felled her as if with a thunderbolt: down went her body, with all the legs doubled, and her poor head turned over, and the nose kissed the ground. The lion stood motionless. Presently the eland, who was not dead, but stunned, began to recover and struggle feebly up.

Then the lion sprang on her with a roar, and rolled her over, and, with two tremendous bites and a shake, tore her entrails out and laid her dying. He sat composedly down, and contemplated her last convulsions, without touching her again.

At his roar, though not loud, the horse, though he had never heard or seen a lion, trembled, and pulled at his halter.

Blacky crept into the water; and Staines was struck with such an awe as he had never felt. Nevertheless, the king of beasts being at a distance, and occupied, and Staines a brave man, and out of sight, he kept his ground and watched, and by those means saw a sight never to be forgotten. The lion rose up, and stood in the sun incredibly beautiful as well as terrible. His was not the mangy hue of the caged lion, but a skin tawny, golden, glossy as a race-horse, and of exquisite tint that shone like pure gold in the sun; his eye a lustrous jewel of richest hue, and his mane sublime. He looked towards the wood, and uttered a full roar. This was so tremendous, that the horse shook all over as if in an ague, and began to lather. Staines recoiled, and his flesh crept, and the Hottentot went under water, and did not emerge for ever so long.

After a pause, the lion roared again, and all the beasts and birds of prey seemed to know the meaning of that terrible roar. Till then the place had been a solitude, but now it began to fill in the strangest way, as if the lord of the forest could call all his subjects together with a trumpet roar: first came two lion cubs, to whom, in fact, the roar had been addressed. The lion rubbed himself several times against the eland, but did not eat a morsel,

and the cubs went in and feasted on the prey. The lion politely and paternally drew back, and watched the young people enjoying themselves.

Meantime approached, on tiptoe, jackals and hyenas, but dared not come too near. Slate-coloured vultures settled at a little distance, but not a soul dared interfere with the cubs; they saw the lion was acting sentinel, and they knew better than come near.

After a time, papa feared for the digestion of those brats, or else his own mouth watered; for he came up, knocked them head over heels with his velvet paw, and they took the gentle hint, and ran into the wood double quick.

Then the lion began tearing away at the eland, and bolting huge morsels greedily. This made the rabble's mouth water. The hyenas, and jackals, and vultures formed a circle ludicrous to behold, and that circle kept narrowing as the lion tore away at his prey. They increased in numbers, and at last hunger overcame prudence; the rear rank shoved on the front, as amongst men, and a general attack seemed imminent.

Then the lion looked up at these invaders, uttered a reproachful growl, and went at them, patting them right and left, and knocking them over. He never touched a vulture, nor, indeed, did he kill an animal. He was a lion, and only killed to eat; yet he soon cleared the place, because he knocked over a few hyenas and jackals, and the rest, being active, tumbled over the vultures before they could spread their heavy wings. After this warning, they made a respectful circle again, through which, in due course, the gorged lion stalked into the wood.

A savage's sentiments change

quickly, and the Hottentot, fearing little from a full lion, was now giggling at Staines's side. Staines asked him which he thought was the lord of all creatures, a man or a lion.

'A lion,' said Blacky, amazed at such a shallow question.

Staines now got up, and proposed to continue their journey. But Blacky was for waiting till the lion was gone to sleep after his meal.

While they discussed the question, the lion burst out of the wood within hearing of their voices, as his pricked-up ears showed, and made straight for them at a distance of scarcely thirty yards.

Now, the chances are, the lion knew nothing about them, and only came to drink at the kloof, after his meal, and perhaps lie under the acacias: but who can think calmly, when his first lion bursts out on him a few paces off? Staines shouldered his rifle, took a hasty, flurried aim, and sent a bullet at him.

If he had missed him, perhaps the report might have turned the lion; but he wounded him, and not mortally. Instantly the enraged beast uttered a terrific roar, and came at him with his mane distended with rage, his eyes glaring, his mouth open, and his whole body dilated with fury.

At that terrible moment, Staines recovered his wits enough to see that what little chance he had was to fire into the destroyer, not at him. He kneeled, and levelled at the centre of the lion's chest, and not till he was within five yards did he fire. Through the smoke he saw the lion in the air above him, and rolled shrieking into the stream and crawled like a worm under the bank, by one motion, and there lay trembling.

A few seconds of sick stupor

passed: all was silent. Had the lion lost him? Was it possible he might yet escape?

All was silent.

He listened, in agony, for the sniffing of the lion, puzzling him out by scent.

No: all was silent.

Staines looked round, and saw a woolly head, and two saucer eyes and open nostrils close by him. It was the Hottentot, more dead than alive.

Staines whispered him, 'I think he is gone.'

The Hottentot whispered, 'Gone a little way to watch. He is wise as well as strong.' With this he disappeared beneath the water.

Still no sound but the screaming of the vultures, and snarling of the hyenas and jackals over the island.

'Take a look,' said Staines.

'Yes,' said Squat; 'but not to-day. Wait here a day, or two. Den he forget and forgive.'

Now, Staines having seen the lion lie down and watch the dying island, was a great deal impressed by this; and, as he had now good hopes of saving his life, he would not throw away a chance. He kept his head just above water, and never moved.

In this freezing situation they remained.

Presently there was a rustling that made both crouch.

It was followed by a croaking noise.

Christopher made himself small.

The Hottentot, on the contrary, raised his head, and ventured a little way into the stream.

By these means he saw it was something very foul, but not terrible. It was a large vulture that had settled on the very top of the nearest acacia.

At this the Hottentot got bolder still, and, to the great surprise of Staines, began to crawl cautiously

into some rushes, and through them up the bank.

The next moment he burst into a mixture of yelling and chirping, and singing, and other sounds so manifestly jubilant, that the vulture flapped heavily away, and Staines emerged in turn, but very cautiously.

Could he believe his eyes? There lay the lion, dead as a stone, on his back, with his four legs in the air, like wooden legs, they were so very dead; and the valiant Squat, dancing about him, and on him, and over him.

Staines, unable to change his sentiments so quickly, eyed even the dead body of the royal beast with awe and wonder. What, had he really laid that terrible monarch low, and with a tube made in a London shop by men who never saw a lion spring, nor heard his awful roar shake the air? He stood with his heart still beating, and said not a word. The shallow Hottentot whipped out a large knife, and began to skin the king of beasts. Staines wondered he could so profane that masterpiece of nature. He felt more inclined to thank God for so great a preservation, and then pass reverently on and leave the dead king undesecrated.

He was roused from his solemn thoughts by the reflection, that there might be a lioness about, since there were cubs: he took a piece of paper, emptied his remaining powder into it, and proceeded to dry it in the sun. This was soon done, and then he loaded both barrels.

By this time the adroit Hottentot had flayed the carcass sufficiently to reveal the mortal injury. The projectile had entered the chest, and, slanting upwards, had burst among the vitals, reducing them to a gory pulp. The lion must have died in the air, when

he bounded on receiving the fatal shot.

The Hottentot uttered a cry of admiration. 'Not the lion king of all, nor even the white man,' he said; 'but Enfeel rifle!'

Staines' eyes glittered. 'You shall have it, and the horse, for your diamond,' said he, eagerly.

The black seemed a little shaken; but did not reply. He got out of it by going on with his lion; and Staines eyed him, and was bitterly disappointed at not getting the diamond even on these terms. He began to feel he should never get it: they were near the high-road; he could not keep the Hottentot to himself much longer. He felt sick at heart. He had wild and wicked thoughts; half hoped the lioness would come and kill the Hottentot, and liberate the jewel that possessed his soul.

At last the skin was off, and the Hottentot said, 'Me take this to my kraal, and dey all say, "Squat a great shooter; kill um lion."

Then Staines saw another chance for him, and summoned all his address for a last effort. 'No, Squat,' said he, 'that skin belongs to me. I shot the lion, with the only rifle that can kill a lion like a cat. Yet you would not give me a diamond—a paltry stone for it. No, Squat, if you were to go into your village with that lion's skin, why the old men would bend their heads to you, and say, "Great is Squat! He killed the lion, and wears his skin." The young women would all fight which should be the wife of Squat. Squat would be king of the village.'

Squat's eyes began to roll.

'And shall I give the skin, and the glory that is my due, to an ill-natured fellow, who refuses me his paltry diamond for a good horse—look at him—and for the rifle that kills lions like rabbits—behold

it; and a hundred pounds in good gold and Dutch notes—see; and for the lion's skin, and glory, and honour, and a rich wife, and to be king of Africa? Never.'

The Hottentot's hands and toes began to work convulsively. 'Good master, Squat ask pardon. Squat was blind. Squat will give the diamond, the great diamond of Africa, for the lion's skin, and the king rifle, and the little horse, and the gold, and Dutch notes every one of them. Dat make just two hundred pounds.'

'More like four hundred,' cried Staines, very loud. 'And how do I know it is a diamond? These large stones are the most deceitful. Show it me this instant,' said he, imperiously.

'Iss, master,' said the crushed Hottentot, with the voice of a mouse, and put the stone into his hand with a child-like faith that almost melted Staines; but he saw he must be firm. 'Where did you find it?' he bawled.

'Master,' said poor Squat, in deprecating tones, 'my little master at the farm wanted plaster. He send to Bulteel's pan; dere was large lumps. Squat say to miners, "May we take de large lumps?" Dey say, "Yes; take de cursed lumps we no can break." We took de cursed lumps. We ride 'em in de cart to farm twenty milses. I beat 'em with my hammer. Dey is very hard. More dey break my heart dan I break their cursed heads. One day I use strong words, like white man, and I hit one large lump too hard; he break, and out come de white clear stone. Iss, him diamond. Long time we know him in our kraal, because he hard. Long time before ever white man know him, tousand years ago, we find him and he make us lilly hole in big stone for make wheat dust. Him a diamond, blank my eyes!'

This was intended as a solemn form of asseveration adapted to the white man's habits.

Yes, reader, he told the truth; and, strange to say, the miners knew the largest stones were in these great lumps of carbonate, but then the lumps were so cruelly hard, they lost all patience with them, and so, finding it was no use to break some of them, and not all, they rejected them all, with curses; and thus this great stone was carted away as rubbish from the mine, and found, like a toad in a hole, by Squat.

'Well,' said Christopher, 'after all, you are an honest fellow, and I think I will buy it; but first you must show me out of this wood; I am not going to be eaten alive in it for want of the king of rifles.'

Squat assented eagerly, and they started at once. They passed the skeleton of the eland; its very bones were polished, and its head carried into the wood; and, looking back, they saw vultures busy on the lion. They soon cleared the wood.

Squat handed Staines the diamond—when it touched his hand, as his own, a bolt of ice seemed to run down his back, and hot water to follow it—and the money, horse, rifle, and skin were made over to Squat.

'Shake hands over it, Squat,' said Staines; 'you are hard, but you are honest.'

'Ias, master, I a good much hard and honest,' said Squat.

'Good-bye, old fellow.'

'Good-bye, master.'

And Squat strutted away, with the halter in his hand, horse following him, rifle under his arm, and the lion's skin over his shoulders, and the tail trailing, a figure sublime in his own eyes, ridiculous in creation's. So vanity triumphed, even in the wilds of Africa.

Staines hurried forward on foot, loading his revolver as he went, for the very vicinity of the wood alarmed him now he had parted with his trusty rifle.

That night he lay down on the open veldt, in his jackal's skin, with no weapon but his revolver, and woke with a start a dozen times. Just before daybreak he scanned the stars carefully, and, noting exactly where the sun rose, made a rough guess at his course, and followed it till the sun was too hot; then he crept under a ragged bush, hung up his jackal's skin, and sweated there, parched with thirst, and gnawed with hunger. When it was cooler, he crept on, and found water, but no food. He was in torture, and began to be frightened, for he was in a desert. He found an ostrich egg, and ate it ravenously.

Next day, hunger took a new form, faintness. He could not walk for it; his jackal's skin oppressed him; he lay down exhausted. A horror seized his dejected soul. The diamond! It would be his death. No man must so long for any earthly thing as he had for this glittering traitor. 'Oh! my good horse! my trusty rifle!' he cried. 'For what have I thrown you away? For starvation. Misers have been found stretched over their gold; and some day my skeleton will be found, and nothing to tell the base death I died of, and deserved; nothing but the cursed diamond. Ay, fiend! glare in my eyes, do!' He felt delirium creeping over him; and, at that, a new terror froze him. His reason, that he had lost once, was he to lose it again? He prayed; he wept; he dozed, and forgot all. When he woke again, a cool air was fanning his cheeks; it revived him a little; it became almost a breeze.

And this breeze, as it happened, carried on its wings the curse of

Africa. There loomed in the north-west a cloud of singular density, that seemed to expand in size as it drew nearer, yet to be still more solid, and darken the air. It seemed a dust-storm. Staines took out his handkerchief, prepared to wrap his face in it, not to be stifled.

But soon there was a whirring and a whizzing, and hundreds of locusts flew over his head; they were followed by thousands, the swiftest of the mighty host. They thickened and thickened, till the air looked solid, and even that glaring sun was blackened by the rushing mass. Birds of all sorts whirled above, and swooped among them: they peppered Staines all over like shot. They stuck in his beard, and all over him; they clogged the bushes, carpeted the ground, while the darkened air sang as with the whirl of machinery. Every bird in the air, and beast of the field, granivorous or carnivorous, was gorged with them, and to these animals was added man, for Staines, being famished, and remembering the wroth Bulteel, lighted a fire, and roasted a handful or two on a flat stone; they were delicious. The fire once lighted, they cooked themselves, for they kept flying into it. Three hours, without interruption, did they darken nature, and before the column ceased, all the beasts of the field came after, gorging them so recklessly that Staines could have shot an antelope dead with his pistol within a yard of him.

But, to tell the horrible truth, the cooked locusts were so nice that he preferred to gorge on them along with the other animals.

He roasted another lot, for future use, and marched on with a good heart.

But now he got on some rough, scrubby ground, and damaged his shoes, and tore his trousers.

This lasted a terrible distance; but at the end of it came the usual arid ground; and at last he came upon the track of wheels and hoofs. He struck it at an acute angle, and that showed him he had made a good line. He limped along it a little way, slowly, being footsore.

By-and-by, looking back, he saw a lot of rough fellows swaggering along behind him. Then he was alarmed, terribly alarmed, for his diamond; he tore a strip off his handkerchief, and tied it cunningly under his armpit as he hobbled on.

The men came up with him.

' Hallo, mate! Come from the diggings?'

' Yes.'

' What luck?'

' Very good.'

' Haw! haw! What, found a fifty carat? Show it us.'

' We found five big stones, my mate and me. He is gone to Cape Town to sell them. I had no luck when he had left me, so I have cut it; going to turn farmer. Can you tell me how far it is to Dale's Kloof?'

No, they could not tell him that. They swung on; and, to Staines, their backs were a cordial, as we say in Scotland.

However, his travels were near an end. Next morning he saw Dale's Kloof in the distance; and, as soon as the heat moderated, he pushed on, with one shoe and tattered trousers; and half an hour before sunset he hobbled up to the place.

It was all bustle. Travellers at the door; their waggons and carts under a long shed.

Ucatella was the first to see him coming, and came and fawned on him with delight. Her eyes glistered, her teeth gleamed. She patted both his cheeks, and then his shoulders, and even his knees, and then flew indoors crying, ' My

doctor child is come home!' This amused three travellers, and brought out Dick, with a hearty welcome.

'But Lordsake, sir, why have you come afoot; and a rough road too? Look at your shoes. Hallo! What is come of the horse?'

'I exchanged him for a diamond.'

'The deuce you did! And the rifle?'

'Exchanged that for the same diamond.'

'It ought to be a big 'un.'

'It is.'

Dick made a wry face. 'Well, sir, you know best. You are welcome, on horse or afoot. You are just in time; Phoebe and me are just sitting down to dinner.'

He took him into a little room they had built for their own privacy, for they liked to be quiet now and then, being country bred; and Phoebe was putting their dinner on the table, when Staines limped in.

She gave a joyful cry, and turned red all over. 'Oh, Doctor!' Then his travel-torn appearance struck her. 'But, dear heart! what a figure! Where's Reginald? Oh, he's not far off *I* know.'

And she flung open the window, and almost flew through it in a moment, to look for her husband.

'Reginald?' said Staines. Then, turning to Dick Dale, 'Why, he is here—isn't he?'

'No, sir: not without he is just come with you.'

'With me?—no. You know, we parted at the diggings. Come, Mr. Dale, he may not be here now; but he has been here. He must have been here.'

Phoebe, who had not lost a word, turned round, with all her high colour gone, and her cheeks getting paler and paler. 'Oh, Dick! what is this?'

'I don't understand it,' said

Dick. 'What ever made you think he was here, sir?'

'Why I tell you he left me to come here.'

'Left you, sir!' faltered Phoebe.

'Why, when?—where?'

'At the diggings—ever so long ago.'

'Blank him! that is just like him; the uneasy fool!' roared Dick.

'No, Mr. Dale, you should not say that; he left me, with my consent, to come to Mrs. Falcon here, and consult her about disposing of our diamonds.'

'Diamonds!—diamonds!' cried Phoebe. 'Oh, they make me tremble. How could you let him go alone? You didn't let him go on foot, I hope?'

'Oh no, Mrs. Falcon; he had his horse, and his rifle, and money to spend on the road.'

'How long ago did he leave you, sir?'

'I—I am sorry to say it was five weeks ago.'

'Five weeks! and not come yet. Ah! the wild beasts!—the diggers!—the murderers! He is dead!'

'God forbid!' faltered Staines; but his own blood began to run cold.

'He is dead. He has died between this and the dreadful diamonds. I shall never see my darling again: he is dead. He is dead.'

She rushed out of the room, and out of the house, throwing her arms above her head in despair, and uttering those words of agony again and again in every variety of anguish.

At such horrible moments women always swoon—if we are to believe the dramatists. I doubt if there is one grain of truth in this. Women seldom swoon at all, unless their bodies are unhealthy, or weakened by the reaction that follows so terrible a shock as this.

At all events, Phoebe, at first, was strong and wild as a lion, and went to and fro outside the house, unconscious of her body's motion, frenzied with agony, and but one word on her lips, 'He is dead!—he is dead!'

Dick followed her, crying like a child, but master of himself; he got his people about her, and half carried her in again; then shut the door in all their faces.

He got the poor creature to sit down, and she began to rock and moan, with her apron over her head, and her brown hair loose about her.

'Why should he be dead?' said Dick. 'Don't give a man up like that, Phoebe. Doctor, tell us more about it. Oh, man, how could you let him out of your sight? You knew how fond the poor creature was of him.'

'But that was it, Mr. Dale,' said Staines. 'I knew his wife must pine for him; and we had found six large diamonds, and a handful of small ones; but the market was glutted; and, to get a better price, he wanted to go straight to Cape Town. But I said, "No; go and show them to your wife, and see whether she will go to Cape Town."

Phoebe began to listen, as was evident by her moaning more softly.

'Might he not have gone straight to Cape Town?' Staines hazarded this timidly.

'Why should he do that, sir? Dale's Kloof is on the road.'

'Only on one road. Mr. Dale, he was well armed, with rifle and revolver; and I cautioned him not to show a diamond on the road. Who would molest him? Diamonds don't show, like gold. Who was to know he had three thousand pounds hidden under his armpits, and in two barrels of his revolver?'

'Three thousand pounds?' cried

Dale. 'You trusted him with three thousand pounds?'

'Certainly. They were worth about three thousand pounds in Cape Town, and half as much again in—'

'Phoebe started up in a moment. 'Thank God!' she cried. 'There's hope for me. Oh, Dick, he is not dead: HE HAS ONLY DESERTED ME.'

And, with these strange and pitiable words, she fell to sobbing, as if her great heart would burst at last.

CHAPTER XXIV.

There came a reaction, and Phoebe was prostrated with grief and alarm. Her brother never doubted now that Reginald had run to Cape Town for a lark. But Phoebe, though she thought so too, could not be sure; and so the double agony of bereavement and desertion tortured her by turns and almost together. For the first time these many years, she was so crushed she could not go about her business, but lay on a little sofa in her own room, and had the blinds down, for her head ached so she could not bear the light.

She conceived a bitter resentment against Staines; and told Dick never to let him into her sight, if he did not want to be her death.

In vain Dick made excuses for him: she would hear none. For once she was as unreasonable as any other living woman: she could see nothing but that she had been happy, after years of misery, and should be happy now, if this man had never entered her house. 'Ah, Colly!' she cried, 'you were wiser than I was. You as good as told me he would make me smart, for lodging and curing him. And I was so happy!'

Dale communicated this as delicately as he could to Staines.

Christopher was deeply grieved and wounded. He thought it unjust, but he knew it was natural: he said, humbly, 'I feel guilty myself, Mr. Dale; and yet, unless I had possessed omniscience, what could I do? I thought of her in all—poor thing! poor thing!'

The tears were in his eyes, and Dick Dale went away scratching his head and thinking it over. The more he thought, the less he was inclined to condemn him.

Staines himself was much troubled in mind, and lived on thorns. He wanted to be off to England, grudged every day, every hour, he spent in Africa. But Mrs. Falcon was his benefactress; he had been, for months and months, garnering up a heap of gratitude towards her. He had not the heart to leave her bad friends, and in misery. He kept hoping Falcon would return, or write.

Two days after his return, he was seated, disconsolate, glueing garnets and carbuncles on to a broad tapering bit of lamb-skin, when Ucatella came to him and said, 'My doctor child sick?'

'No, not sick: but miserable.' And he explained to her, as well as he could, what had passed. 'But,' said he, 'I would not mind the loss of the diamonds now, if I was only sure he was alive. I think most of poor, poor Mrs. Falcon.'

While Ucatella pondered this, but with one eye of demure curiosity on the coronet he was making, he told her it was for her—he had not forgot her at the mines. 'These stones,' said he, 'are not valued there; but see how glorious they are!'

In a few minutes he had finished the coronet, and gave it her. She uttered a chuckle of delight, and, with instinctive art, bound it, in a turn of her hand, about her brow;

and then Staines himself was struck dumb with amazement. The carbuncles gathered from those mines look like rubies, so full of fire are they, and of enormous size. The chaplet had twelve great carbuncles in the centre, and went off by gradations into smaller garnets by the thousand. They flashed their blood-red flames in the African sun, and the head of Ucatella, grand before, became the head of the Sphinx, encircled with a coronet of fire. She bestowed a look of rapturous gratitude on Staines, and then glided away, like the stately Juno, to admire herself in the nearest glass like any other coquette, black, brown, yellow, copper, or white.

That very day, towards sunset, she burst upon Staines quite suddenly, with her coronet gleaming on her magnificent head, and her eyes like coals of fire, and under her magnificent arm hard as a rock, a boy kicking and struggling in vain. She was furiously excited, and, for the first time, showed signs of the savage in the whites of her eyes, which seemed to turn the glorious pupils into semi-circles. She clutched Staines by the shoulder with her left hand, and swept along with the pair, like dark Fate, or as potent justice sweeps away a pair of culprits, and carried them to the little window, and cried 'Open—open!'

Dick Dale was at dinner. Phoebe lying down. Dick got up, rather crossly, and threw open the window. 'What is up now?' said he, crossly: he was like two or three more Englishmen—hated to be bothered at dinner-time.

'Dar,' screamed Ucatella, setting down Tim, but holding him tight by the shoulder; 'now you tell what you see that night, you lilly Cair trash; if you not tell, I kill you DEAD,' and she showed

the whites of her eyes, like a wild beast.

Tim, thoroughly alarmed, quivered out that he had seen lilly master ride up to the gate one bright night, and look in, and Tim thought he was going in: but he changed his mind, and galloped away that way; and the monkey pointed south.

'And why couldn't you tell us this before?' questioned Dick.

'Me mind de sheep,' said Tim, apologetically. 'Me not mind de lilly master: jackals not eat him.'

'You no more sense dan a sheep yourself,' said Ucatella, loftily.

'No, no: God bless you both,' cried poor Pheebe: 'now I know the worst:' and a great burst of tears relieved her suffering heart.

Dick went out softly. When he got outside the door, he drew them all apart, and said, 'Yuke, you *are* a good-hearted girl. I'll never forget this while I live; and, Tim, there's a shilling for thee; but don't you go and spend it in Cape smoke; that is poison to whites, and destruction to blacks.'

'No, master,' said Tim. 'I shall buy much bread, and make my tomach tiff;' then, with a glance of reproach at the domestic caterer, Ucatella; 'I almost never have my tomach tiff.'

Dick left his sister alone an hour or two, to have her cry out.

When he went back to her, there was a change: the brave woman no longer lay prostrate. She went about her business; only she was always either crying or drowning her tears.

He brought Doctor Staines in. Pheebe instantly turned her back on him with a shudder there was no mistaking.

'I had better go,' said Staines. 'Mrs. Falcon will never forgive me.'

'She will have to quarrel with me else,' said Dick, steadily. 'Sit you down, doctor. Honest folk like you and me and Phoebe wasn't made to quarrel for want of looking a thing all round. My sister, she hasn't looked it all round, and I have. Come, Pheebe, 'tis no use your blinding yourself. How was the poor doctor to know your husband is a blackguard?'

'He is not a blackguard. How dare you say that to my face?'

'He is a blackguard, and always was. And now he is a thief to boot. He has stolen those diamonds; you know that very well.'

'Gently, Mr. Dale; you forget: they are as much his as mine.'

'Well, and if half a sheep is mine, and I take the whole and sell him, and keep the money, what is that but stealing? Why, I wonder at you, Pheebe. You was always honest yourself, and yet you see the doctor robbed by your man, and that does not trouble you. What has he done to deserve it? He has been a good friend to us. He has put us on the road. We did little more than keep the pot boiling, before he came—well, yes, we stored grain; but whose advice has turned that grain to gold, I might say? Well, what's his offence? He trusted the diamonds to your man, and sent him to you. Is he the first honest man that has trusted a rogue? How was he to know? Likely he judged the husband by the wife. Answer me one thing, Pheebe. If he makes away with fifteen hundred pounds that is his, or partly yours—for he has eaten your bread ever since I knew him—and fifteen hundred more that is the doctor's, where shall we find fifteen hundred pounds all in a moment, to pay the doctor back his own?'

'My honest friend,' said Staines,

'you are tormenting yourself with shadows. I don't believe Mr. Falcon will wrong me of a shilling; and, if he does, I shall quietly repay myself out of the big diamond. Yes, my dear friends, I did not throw away your horse, nor your rifle, nor your money: I gave them all, and the lion's skin—I gave them all—for this.'

And he laid the big diamond on the table.

It was as big as a walnut, and of the purest water.

Dick Dale glanced at it stupidly. Phoebe turned her back on it, with a cry of horror, and then came slowly round by degrees; and her eyes were fascinated by the royal gem.

'Yes,' said Staines, sadly, 'I had to strip myself of all, to buy it, and, when I had got it, how proud I was, and how happy I thought we should all be over it; for it is half yours, half mine. Yes, Mr. Dale, there lies six thousand pounds that belong to Mrs. Falcon.'

'Six thousand pounds!' cried Dick.

'I am sure of it. And so, if your suspicions are correct, and poor Falcon should yield to a sudden temptation, and spend all that money, I shall just coolly deduct it from your share of this wonderful stone: so make your mind easy. But no: if Falcon is really so wicked as to desert his happy home, and so mad as to spend thousands in a month or two, let us go and save him.'

'That is my business,' said Phoebe. 'I am going in the mail-cart to-morrow.'

'Well, you won't go alone,' said Dick.

'Mrs. Falcon,' said Staines, imploringly, 'let me go with you.'

'Thank you, sir. My brother can take care of me.'

'Me! You had better not take

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me. If I catch hold of him, by —— I'll break his neck, or his back, or his leg, or something: he'll never run away from you again, if I lay hands on him,' replied Dick.

'I'll go alone. You are both against me.'

'No, Mrs. Falcon. I am not,' said Staines. 'My heart bleeds for you.'

'Don't you demean yourself, praying her,' said Dick. 'It's a public conveyance: you have no need to ask *her* leave.'

'That is true: I cannot hinder folk from going to Cape Town the same day,' said Phoebe, sullenly.

'If I might presume to advise, I would take little Tommy.'

'What! all that road: do you want me to lose my child, as well as my man?'

'Oh! Mrs. Falcon!'

'Don't speak to her, doctor, to get your nose snapped off: give her time. She'll come to her senses before she dies.'

Next day Mrs. Falcon and Staines started for Cape Town. Staines paid her every attention, when opportunity offered. But she was sullen, and gloomy, and held no converse with him.

He landed her at an inn: and then told her he would go at once to the jeweller's. He asked her piteously would she lend him a pound or two, to prosecute his researches. She took out her purse, without a word, and lent him two pounds.

He began to scour the town: the jewellers he visited could tell him nothing. At last he came to a shop, and there he found Mrs. Falcon making her inquiries independently. She said, coldly, 'You had better come with me, and get your money and things.'

She took him to the bank—it happened to be the one she did business with—and said, 'This is

Doctor Christie, come for his money and jewels.'

There was some demur at this: but the cashier recognized him, and, Phoebe, making herself responsible, the money and jewels were handed over.

Staines whispered Phoebe, 'Are you sure the jewels are mine?'

'They were found on you, sir.'

Staines took them, looking confused. He did not know what to think. When they got into the street again he told her it was very kind of her to think of his interest at all.

No answer: she was not going to make friends with him over such a trifle as that.

By degrees, however, Christopher's zeal on her behalf broke the ice; and besides, as the search proved unavailing, she needed sympathy; and he gave it her, and did not abuse her husband, as Dick Dale did.

One day, in the street, after a long thought, she said to him, ' Didn't you say, sir, you gave him a letter for me?'

'I gave him two letters; one of them was to you.'

'Could you remember what you said in it?'

'Perfectly. I begged you, if you should go to England, to break the truth to my wife. She is very excitable; and sudden joy has killed ere now. I gave you particular instructions.'

'And you were very wise. But whatever could make you think I would go to England?'

'He told me you only wanted an excuse.'

'Oh!!'

'When he told me that, I caught at it, of course. It was all the world to me to get my Rosa told by such a kind, good, sensible friend as you: and, Mrs. Falcon, I had no scruple about troubling you; because I knew the stones

would sell for at least a thousand pounds more in England than here, and that would pay your expenses.'

'I see, sir: I see. 'Twas very natural: you love your wife.'

'Better than my life.'

'And he told you I only wanted an excuse to go to England?'

'He did indeed. It was not true?'

'It was anything but true. I had suffered so in England: I had been so happy here: too happy to last. Ah! well, it is all over. Let us think of the matter in hand. Sure that was not the only letter you gave my husband? Didn't you write to her?'

'Of course I did; but that was enclosed to you, and not to be given to her until you had broken the joyful news to her. Yes, Mrs. Falcon, I wrote and told her everything: my loss at sea: how I was saved, after, by your kindness. Our journeys—from Cape Town—and then to the diggings, my sudden good fortune—my hopes—my joy—oh, my poor Rosa: and now I suppose she will never get it. It is too cruel of him. I shall go home by the next steamer. I can't stay here any longer, for you or anybody. Oh, and I enclosed my ruby ring, that she gave me, for I thought she might not believe you without that.'

'Let me think,' said Phoebe, turning ashy pale. 'For mercy's sake, let me think.'

'He has read both those letters, sir.'

'She will never see hers: any more than I shall see mine.'

She paused again, thinking harder and harder.

'We must take two places in the next mail steamer. I must look after my husband; AND YOU AFTER YOUR WIFE.'

(To be continued.)

POPULAR PRELATES.

THERE was rather an odd debate in Convocation the other day, in which various right reverend prelates in discussing the subject of the increase of the Episcopate, also discussed ways and means, and compared expenditure and experiences. The debate set me meditating on the agreeable subject of popular prelates, the social aspects of hierarchical life—that very human, practical side of life which these great beings so freely exposed to the gaze of all readers of the ecclesiastical newspapers. I think there was a certain something in the debate which most readers would like; the bishops complained of hard times, increased expences, and insufficient income; yet, as a rule, they seemed willing to subdivide their dioceses and to make sacrifices that they might attain their objects. Novelists have often had a great deal to say about bishops. Both Thackeray and Dickens introduced them; and the Bishop of Barchester is as well known as any prelate on the bench. We will humbly venture to speak a little about bishops—as they do not hesitate to speak rather freely about themselves.

Still, I think that some of these Confessions, which perhaps the bishops made in imitation of St. Augustine, are open to criticism. The bishops talk a great deal about their hospitality. A bishop, we know, is supposed to be given to hospitality. Perhaps something depends on what he means by hospitality. The amount of actual hospitality exercised by bishops towards the humble curates of a diocese is, I imagine, extremely limited. I have heard of very few authentic instances, except on that great event of a curate's life, his ordination.

As a matter of fact, I believe that bishops receive from their clergy more hospitalities than they exhibit. Whenever a bishop comes to do episcopal work, preach a sermon, hold a confirmation, preside over a meeting, the local clergyman always 'takes him in,' perhaps his horses as well, and his chaplain almost to a certainty. Some bishops are more considerate, and make the clergyman they visit act as chaplain for the nonce. Sometimes the prelate condescends to prolong his stay for several days. The bishop's visit is an immense event in the history of a quiet parsonage. What it is like may be seen in a characteristic passage in the life of Charlotte Brontë. She tells how Dr. Longley came to Haworth parsonage; what an excitement it was, and how she got the headache afterwards. Archbishop Longley was the most benignant of men; and Charlotte Brontë pronounced him to be every inch a bishop. He looked it every inch. Every preparation is made to receive the right reverend prelate; and, as it is supposed that he will only eat and drink of the best, strenuous efforts are made to provide the best for him. Of course bishops are as moderate, more moderate, perhaps, than most people, and can take very hard exercise. As a rule, they are a much less rubicund body of men than the judges. There are bishops who would surpass the hardiest of their clergy in pedestrianism and climbing feats. Still, the rural clergyman lays himself out to commit perhaps his solitary extravagance in the course of the year, that he may do honour to his diocesan. It is a good opportunity of gathering his friends and leading parishioners around him and

doing things in the style of the old days, before his income was stationary and his family anything but stationary. I know a place where a bishop's incursion is a sort of picnic. One friend sends in grapes, another, pheasant; another, a raised pie; another, a brace of bottles of old wine—and then they rejoice together over these good things and their bishop. The great man comes—given kindly speeches and gracious glances, deplores the spread of revolutionary principles, makes a number of personal inquiries, whenever he can find common ground, and departs—having conferred as much kindness as he has received. We are not criticising or finding fault with this kind of hospitality; no doubt it is genial and graceful. Our point is, that the bishop shows no such extent of hospitality that requires a large expenditure, or warrants an expression of regret over a limited income. In the first place, he gets as much hospitality as he gives. In the next place, he does not give very much, and what he gives need only be of the simplest kind. The clergyman would value a chop and a glass of sound sherry, with a little real kindness and counsel from his diocesan, much more than coming, as one of two dozen, to a banquet, or one of two hundred to a garden party. The real expenses of a bishop—which sometimes make him complain that he could not get on upon his episcopal income unless a private fortune were superadded—lie in his large establishment; the many menials, expenses of his horses, the heavy bills with the tradespeople; and it is too bad that the poorer clergy should be credited with this heavy expenditure. The bishop is a county magnate, and he associates with other county magnates, and his 'light' and 'sweetness,' wines and dishes, are generally reserved

for them. It is rather hard to charge to the account of poor persons what is really spent on the great ones of the earth.

Something more might be said of episcopal hospitalities. A bishop's dinners, within living memory, have been very awful affairs. A crowd of guests assembled in the drawing-room and were left to entertain each other. Just before dinner was ready, the great man made his appearance, and transacted some hurried greetings. Then he shuffled downstairs and took his seat at the head of the table. His secretary would take the other end of the table, crack his jokes, call for wine, and keep up the conversation. The bishop would make a few remarks to his right-hand neighbour and to his left—and make his escape as soon as he could. He treated his guests after the fashion of a duke of Omnium, but for a very different reason. The bishop was a learned man and a good one, but shy and nervous—hardly equal to the duties of hospitality, but desirous to discharge them and to get out of them as soon as he could. There are several bishops who fill their houses with guests, but the guests complain that they see little or nothing of their hosts. It is rather hard when the guests are not only friends, but relations, and have seen nothing of their distinguished relative for many long years. There was one very kindly old bishop who filled his nice house with nice people, but only showed at a late dinner. His guests might see him walking about in a part of his garden where none dared to intrude, reading a book and feeding his ducks. He was very nice during dinner, but would fall asleep directly afterwards. The difficult point with the guests was, whether they should wake him up to say good-night, or leave him

alone. In the latter case, the good bishop, being a bachelor, would fall asleep in his armchair until he was picked up by the housemaid in the morning. There is an amusing traditional story of Bishop Warburton still preserved at Gloucester. Warburton was a warm-hearted impulsive man, who loved to enjoy himself and see others around him do the same. A young curate was dining with him, who was too modest to take any wine and too awe-struck to enter into conversation. The bishop passed the bottle freely and made various attempts to draw his guest into conversation. All his endeavours were fruitless, and at last the bishop quite lost patience. 'Sir,' he shouted, 'if you're a man, talk, and if you're a fish, drink.' Bishops do not now give much wine, but I suppose their wine is very good. I suppose that a wine-merchant would naturally send a bishop good wine. One day I met a high cathedral dignitary, somewhat of a valletudinarian, who was naturally obliged to pay considerable attention to diet. 'I have been obliged to pay considerable attention to what I drink,' he said; 'and, after a good deal of trial and attention, I have found out that upon the whole champagne is the most wholesome drink I can take as an ordinary beverage. I don't take it, however, on Fridays in Lent,' he added; and then, with a deep heartfelt sigh, 'I find it a great deprivation.'

We are treading on high and difficult ground when we speak of bishops; but episcopal stories are by no means the worst, or afford the least curious experiences. Bishop Blomfield used to tell a story of having been waited on by a deputation headed by a colonel in the army, to request him to make provision that the inmates of lunatic asylums should be regularly visited by the parochial clergy. The bishop

answered that he did not know whether the clergy would like this additional burden, and, even if they did, he hardly thought this would give any additional security for the comfort of lunatics. 'But,' rejoined the colonel, 'we would hail with satisfaction any additional security; for I can assure your lordship that there is not a single member of this deputation *who has not himself, at some time or other, been an inmate of a lunatic asylum!*' The bishop certainly felt relieved when this singular deputation left his apartment. He tells stories rather against his own order. Earl Spencer was introduced one day to a bishop's wife who was accompanying her husband on a visitation. He found her sitting in a room at an hotel clad in all the colours of the rainbow and covered with diamonds. The sight of such a mass of splendour overpowered him, and the earl is described as being struck 'all of a heap.' In the meanwhile, the bishop had been inflicting a 'visitation' on his clergy of the severest and most violent kind. We know the instance of a clergyman who once suddenly came into the possession of immense estates. His wife invited some visitors to her splendid country residence, and, on the first morning of their stay, she received them at the breakfast-table in a low dress with a profusion of diamonds. One extraordinary visitation charge came incidentally to our notice. We are bound, however, to say that it was not by a bishop but by an archdeacon, a gentleman who 'discharges archidiaconal functions' and is *oculus episcopi*. He concluded his charge with the following affecting language: 'I must now, gentlemen, bring these remarks to a conclusion. I suppose we shall presently meet again for the purposes of refection, at our customary

hotel in this city. I am happy to inform you that, since we last assembled, there has been a considerable reduction in the charges of the establishment.'

The very essence of a prelate is to be popular. It is to many his final cause—the *raison d'être*. He has probably risen by the art of pleasing, and that gay science remains. When people were once discussing the character of a certain bishop, Dr. Parr turned round and said: 'Sir, he is a poor, paltry prelate, proud of petty popularity, and perpetually preaching to petticoats.' Dr. Parr's language here, as so often, is exaggerated, and let us hope that, for the sake of alliteration, his phraseology has been peculiarly paradoxical and parabolical. Whatever else a bishop may be he is generally an astute man of the world. He studies society and character. He is as well read as any novelist in the lore of the human heart. He is a safe card, and his presence always insures attention and confers distinction. The bishop knows society well. He might, perhaps, have given a hint to Chesterfield, or have deepened the cynicism of Selwyn. Those who wish to know to what rare heights the charm of manner may be carried might study the social ways of bishops. The gracious accent, the honeyed tone, the beaming eye, the affectionate interest, not to mention the neat repartee, flow of eloquence, and store of anecdote, all make such a prelate popular. No wonder that he is eagerly engaged for a dinner weeks and weeks beforehand, and that his engagements are several deep a night in the height of the season.

It does not follow, however, that such a prelate is equally gracious and popular outside the limits of the society which he

adorns. The Proudie portraiture is hardly an exaggeration. He may lead a cat and dog life with his wife. He may quarrel with his son who has had a discreditable career at the University, and his daughter who wishes to make a match of which he disapproves. Now and then a prelate makes himself extremely popular in his parental arrangements. I remember the case of a young and almost penniless curate who was staying at an episcopal palace. He had managed to fall in love with the bishop's daughter. He thought it advisable to abbreviate his visit, and went to the father to explain the reason. His lordship inquired whether he had told his feelings to the daughter, and received the reply which he had expected. 'You are a good fellow,' said the bishop. 'I do not see any reason why you should not be my son-in-law. You are a good scholar, a good curate, a good man. My daughter will be safe and happy with you.' It must be owned, however, that bishops possess peculiar facilities in helping on their clerical sons-in-law. Other bishops are by no means so amiable. The man may be captious, irritable, impatient. It is said of a late very eminent bishop that he once rated a young clergyman very soundly after this style. The fact is given in a published memoir. 'My lord,' said the young fellow, 'you are called my Father in God. Permit me to inquire whether you consider that you have spoken as a father to me just now?' The generous-hearted bishop heard the reproof and, conscience-stricken, burst into tears. One day a poor parson was seen coming from a bishop's palace. 'You have seen the bishop, then?' 'Yes,' was the answer, 'and I had rather any day meet my Maker than meet

my bishop.' Bishops know, however, how to combine the *suaviter* with the *fortiter*, and to put the velvet over the steel. A friend of mine once had to see the late Bishop of Exeter on some long and painful matter, and that renowned Henry of Exeter knew not only to hold his own but to take, in matters of patronage, the own of other people. Battle was waged all the morning, and then the guest crossed the little bridge that led into the pleasant sea-swept garden of Bishopstow. Presently the bishop was seen running after him from the front door and exclaiming, in his softest tones, 'My dear friend, let me implore you, whatever you do, not to turn to the left. You will meet the east wind.' Once a young Fellow of a college entertained me with an account of a long conversation which he had had with a right reverend prelate. The bishop had spent all the time in affectionately urging upon him the necessity of wearing goloshes.

I like very much Izaak Walton's account of meeting Bishop Sander-
son; how they went into a public-house in Little Britain and had bread and cheese and beer, and the bishop talked divinely about the Psalms. For the most ex-
quisite episcopal portraiture in any literature we must go not to our own country but to France. For tenderness, Christian sim-
plicity, and real dignity, there is hardly any portraiture comparable to that of Bishop Myriel in Victor Hugo's 'Les Misérables.' The French bishops satisfactorily show on how small a stipend episcopal functions may be discharged. There is one English bishop who is not altogether unlike Myriel in some of his characteristics. The poor know what it is to wait at his gate to receive charitable doles as he issues forth, and often has

he paced his cathedral aisles through the hours of night wrapt in thoughtful meditation. There was another popular prelate who had an equally amiable but more picturesque propensity. He had longed in early life to enter the navy, but through family inducements he entered the church instead, and made a very good thing of it. He contrived, however, to gratify his early nautical propensities by occasionally climbing up the spire of his own cathedral. There was an amiable modern archbishop who could hardly contain his astonishment and surprise at finding himself in that exalted position. We are informed that he would lie back in his chair after dinner and innocently chuckle, saying, 'Only fancy, I'm an arch-
bishop: only fancy it now!' Some bishops deliberately lay themselves out for popularity. If one of the clergy makes the slightest inquiry, although he is absolutely unknown to his diocesan, the latter signs himself, 'Yours ever most faithfully.' Another bishop has inaugurated the use of postcards, but the Latinity is occasionally puzzling to bucolic parsons who have no near neighbour or dictionary. Another may probably fling his diocese into consternation by sending his postal communications in patristic Greek. The popular, easy-going prelate is very anxious to avoid identifying himself with a religious party. It is said of more than one of our bishops that they always made a rule of promoting a high churchman and low churchman alternately, which said much for their liberality, if little for their convictions.

A bishop is pre-eminently a safe man. He likes to be with safe people. He will rarely hold out a hand to assist a struggling man, but when he has struggled

to shore he will offer him his congratulations. He is generally surrounded by a clique, and rarely seeks out merit for himself. What spoils a bishop most of all is the excessive adulation which he receives from his clergy. Mrs. Cadwallader says of her husband, 'He will even speak well of the bishop, though I tell him it is unnatural in a beneficed clergyman.' But though the clergyman may grumble at his bishop, he is no sooner brought within the range of the great man's influence than he is transformed. A smile and a good word go an immense way until such currency becomes debased by incessant use. A mysterious glamour hangs about the bishop. The clergy have given up the right divine of kings—it went out with the last nonjurors—but they still believe in the right divine of bishops. It is astonishing to what an extent men, by no means destitute of self-respect, will carry the principle of episcopal adoration. A man will hold an umbrella over a bishop's head until he is wet to the skin himself. A man will seize hold of the bag in which the bishop carries his episcopal toggery, although the burly prelate is much better able to sustain a burden. I know of a young Levite who had a bad egg brought to table when he was at an episcopal breakfast. The bishop was shocked, and desired that another should be procured. 'No, thank you, my lord,' with a gesture of utter self-abnegation, '*it's good enough for me*', and bolted his evil-smelling portion. There is nothing selfish or obsequious in all this. It is simply the right divine of bishops pushed to an extreme. When excellent men in all sorts of ways assure them that they are superhuman, they begin to admit the soft impeachment. They forget that bishops once had their

confessors, and used at times to make very queer confessions.

After all, there is an element of popularity about prelacy, which sounds odd enough when we remember the Martin Marprelates of England, and how prelacy and popery have always been associated in Scotland. However rank and pay become attenuated, there is always a certain amount of repute in being a bishop, and always a large supply of men at home who are willing to become such. Look at the remarkable development of episcopacy in the colonies. In the last thirty years they have made about thirty sees, and large plans for further development are sketched out. They have half a dozen bishops in New Zealand, with a population to superintend half that of Manchester, the 'Anglican' element being decidedly in the minority. Just as the English fauna multiply more abundantly in Australia than anywhere else, so there is a multiplication of bishops going on in the colonies which leaves things in England far behind. Politically, the colonies regard with jealousy any implied claim of prelatical superiority. There was almost a civil war in one of the colonies because the bishop took precedence after the governor. It seems that the legal right lay with the bishop, but he had the good sense to concede the point. I hope he became a popular prelate in consequence. Colonial bishops sometimes gently deprecate being called *my lord*, but they don't much mind it. If you call an American bishop 'my lord,' the titillation is perfect. George the Fourth once addressed a bishop of Calcutta as *my lord*, which is supposed to have set the rule in all ensuing cases. I question, however, whether 'that most religious and gracious king' could have greatly heightened their

odour of sanctity. Bishops in England, in many cases, do not coalesce very cordially with bishops from the colonies, probably because the commonness of the article has a tendency to cheapen it.

Sometimes a bishop loses in dignity what he gains in popularity. No one objects to a bishop being amusing and pleasant. I have known an archbishop tell stories, and relax into grins; but it is rather odd when a bishop has been unable to shake off the ways of the undergraduate. It is not wise when a bishop gets decidedly slangy, and a layman is ready to rebuke him for irreverence. The transparent goodness and simplicity of the man justify him, and no one is really harmed but himself. I suppose a right reverend popular prelate is now rather sorry for his little jest about the political agitator and the horse-pond. The gig-bishop is decidedly in advance of the bishop who has a state-carriage. The late Bishop Denison was a gig-bishop; and the feelings of love and devotion with which he was regarded in his diocese have never been surpassed. The bishop who drops in upon a man suddenly and without regard to appearances, asks for a cup of tea, and is content to take pot-luck, makes little jokes about his ecclesiastical habiliments, and enters into the small-talk of the parish, and at the same time shows how deeply and thoroughly his heart is in his work, is always deservedly popular. If bishops only knew by what simple, winning ways they might gain the hearts of clergy and laity—a presence to be loved, a memory to be reverenced! It is not very often done, and not always is there any fault when it is not done. There are bishops all whose joints have grown very stiff in out-of-the-way places before they received their appointments; who

find themselves in armour that they have not proved, and regret their own want of fitness and flexibility. They have come to preside over pastors, when they have never known anything of parishes. They own and regret this themselves; they would willingly learn the gentle arts by which they might make their people happy and themselves popular. They must be content to go on steadily in the path of rugged, unadorned duty; content to know that they are contriving to do things as well as they can according to their lights, and that their shortcomings are not so much their own as those of the system of things under which they live.

In a somewhat remarkable book lately published, Charles Burton's 'Notes of Thought,' there is a good deal of sensible talk about bishops. He certainly suggests a novel use for them: 'Would it not be happy for all parties if idiots and old people, when grown imbecile, could be comfortably shot? I would have it done with the utmost decorum; perhaps by the bishop of the diocese.' The bishop would have a precedent in that highly intelligent tribe of barbarians about whom Herodotus tells us. But the bishop has many multifarious public duties to discharge. He has to officiate at the marriages of the interesting belles of the Upper Ten, and his wedding-breakfast speeches have frequently a neatness and jocoseness which leave the smart young gentleman who has to return thanks for the bridesmaids immeasurably behind. Then the bishop has to take the chair at a variety of public meetings of a religious and philanthropic character, and to preach sermons for all sorts of charities and institutions. As a rule, with a few very eminent exceptions, the speeches and sermons are not lively.

People go in order to give their eyes the intellectual feast of beholding a bishop; but they depart with their minds somewhat perturbed on the subject of episcopacy. Of course things vary greatly. There is one bishop who takes rank among the very first parliamentary orators; and another, he of Winchester, who does not come very far behind. When such men preach, the edifices where they are expected become besieged places, and there is something very imposing in the crush of the vast multitudes. Then the bishops will do pleasant, manly, somewhat un-bishoply things, which will take hugely with people. In dealing with a meeting of workmen we have known a bishop chaff as adroitly as a cabby. We have known another make a journey on the engine of a coal train. We have known another go to a pit's mouth to console with colliers after an accident. We have known another preach to cabmen in the yard of an inn. Such incidents are picturesque, and likely to sustain the popularity of an order. There are eminent men, too, who have refused bishoprics, and whose influence is more than episcopal. Such men as Stanley, Liddon, Vaughan, are far better known than the majority of our prelates.

Bishops fall into batches. There are the Greek play bishops, the head master bishops, the *Exegesis* bishops, bishops who have written works on the sacred writings, and what may be called the political prelates, because they have been appointed to satisfy a party or to meet a political cry. We must not, however, go into matters too minutely. Some men fling themselves with immense energy and great originating power into the work of their diocese, while others are satisfied with routine work and the rules of the ser-

vice, often discharged in a most mechanical kind of way. The late Bishop Lonsdale, according to his published memoir, insisted on answering all his letters himself; and it is not too much to say that his correspondence, which might easily have been discharged, for the most part, by a secretary, crushed him. In fact, some bishops spend a great deal of time in this way, which surely ought to be devoted to the larger interests of the diocese. A bishop's private room is often like a lawyer's office, in which the prelate grinds away at the transaction of ecclesiastical business, often discharged in a very legal and technical spirit. Surely, elaborate and costly machinery is not necessary for mere matters of form which might be discharged in an attorney's office. We remember that a Church paper once asserted that bishops were mere 'hewers of wood and drawers of water' to men who are mainly engaged in the more religious and spiritual duties of their calling. Such a bishop frequently becomes a martinet. He acts towards his curates very much as a head master does to the boys of the lower fifth. He makes the curate wonder whether he will be favoured with one finger, two, or three, or, great and glorious event, with the whole hand. He has a distant stateliness and an icy formality of manner. Among the new bishops this sort of thing is very much going out, although traditions are preserved for years in country vicarages of stories of haughtiness and grandeur. The bishop of the present day understands that he must not lord it over men as earnest and good as himself, except from the fact that they have not had the accident of an accident which, through political considerations, has conferred the mitre. Even the mitre is not always able to

confer real dignity on the head that wears it. There may be a want of harmony between the man and the office. As George Eliot acutely says in 'Middlemarch,' 'Becoming a dean, or even a bishop, would make little difference, I fear, to Mr. Casaubon's uneasiness. Doubtless some ancient Greek has observed that behind the big mask and the speaking-trumpet there must always be our poor little eyes peeping as usual, and our timorous lips more or less under anxious control.'

Still I think a worthy D.D. would rather be the most unpopular of bishops than be the fashionable and popular prelate who streams like a meteor through society, but is everywhere distrusted as insincere and self-seeking. The worst thing that can befall a hierarchy is when the members who are most prominent in the public eye fail conspicuously to satisfy the first demands of the clergy; when their honeyed utterances are listened to with suspicion or disbelief; and when they are palpably dominated by such follies as the love of novelty and excitement, the lust of power, and the spirit of intrigue. All those who are versed in episcopal

annals know that there have been such scandals as a matter of history, and that they are not altogether become extinct. One of the worst things about episcopacy is that many a good man relapses into insignificance, *pollicitus meliora*. He has promised to be a great reformer—and a sweeping ecclesiastical Reform Bill is one of the most grievous wants of the age—but his activity simply runs vapid in the way of making about three public speeches a week. Another was a keen thinker; but the busy walks of life now allow scanty scope for meditation. Another began a *magnum opus*, but his pen lies idle. Now and then we hear of a prelate who gets up at six in the mornings, lights his own fire, and proceeds to business; but more likely their time is spent in a constant rush, in which all the most valuable material for time and thought is fruitlessly consumed—sometimes in a round of dinners, levées, visits to country houses, fashionable assemblies, parliamentary attendances; and the Church of England, for her great saints and thinkers, has to turn away from an Erastian bench to country parsonages and academic cloisters.



BRIDES OF LONDON SOCIETY.

I. THE BRITISH BRIDE. B.C. 48.

THE first bride of London Society is, without question, the British bride, first denizen of the cluster of habitations which King Lud had surrounded with a mud-wall and dignified with the name of a city. But ancient London consisted of nothing but wooden huts, the walls of stakes entwined with osiers, the high sugar-loaf roof thatched with reeds or straw—the whole resembling a Welsh pigsty. Yet this was the most civilised part of the island; the wilder inhabitants of the north were still clad in the products of the chase, the skins of deer and the bear, or the British belle would strive to possess herself of the coveted mantle made of the hide of the brindled or spotted ox, loosely pinned together with thorns. The southern Britons were more richly attired. The women had learned from their more cultivated sisters of Gaul the arts of dressing, weaving, and spinning both flax and wool, and they excelled in dyeing them of various colours; among these the most favoured was procured from the woad, the painting with which had obtained for their countrymen the name of the 'azure-coloured Britons.' The London bride, as she appears before the reader, is dressed in a woollen garment woven or worked in coloured checkers like the Highland tartan, or in motley stripes intended to imitate the discarded mantle of the brindled ox. Her hair hangs floating over her shoulders, her head is encircled by a wreath of wild flowers. She is profusely covered with ornaments. The simple British necklace is composed of pieces

of bone alternating with beads of jet of that kind called Kimmeridge coal, gathered from the submarine forests of the island. Perhaps a few amber beads, brought by some Phoenician traders from the shores of the Baltic, add to her ornaments, and, richer still, the twisted necklace of gold, with bracelets and armlets, craftily worked, of the same precious material.

In her hand she holds a short spear or javelin, its flint head inserted in the cleft of an oaken shaft; for the British bride will have to accompany her husband in hunting, perhaps in war, and she has inherited from her Eastern ancestors the courage, independence and endurance which their wearisome migrations and constant hardships had taught them; and so it was when the invaders occupied the land; the women of the West accompanied their husbands in their border excursions, and the Roman legions quailed before the bravery of Boadicea.

What ceremonies attended the marriage of the brides of London Society in those remote ages, history does not inform us, or whether the Druid priests took any part in it. We only know that it was concluded by the customary marriage feasts, and that on this solemn occasion the cup of libation, in all nations the symbol of immortality, was produced. The guests assembled, the chiefs in their golden torques, the bride timidly approaches the bridegroom and offers to him the consecrated cup, out of which he drinks and returns it to the bride. The simple earthen vessel is then carefully put away

among her treasures, and never again brought to light until laid by her side in her coffin.

The ceremony over—

'His house she enters—there to be a light,
Shining within where all without is night;
A guardian angel o'er his life presiding,
Doubling his pleasures, all his cares dividing.'

The Ancient Briton was by nature mild and gentle, plain and honest in all his dealings, charitable to the necessitous, for he said that the money he lent on earth would be repaid doublefold in heaven. His wife soon enters on her domestic duties, which, with their simple habits, were not onerous. They had neither flocks nor herds, for they lived on the produce of the chase. Poultry and geese they were forbidden by Druidic law to eat, and they do not appear to have sought for fish. Their drink was milk and a beve-

rage made from barley. Wine was not known until the Romans introduced the culture of the vine. A few rude earthen or wooden bowls contained their food. Much of the wife's time was taken up in the weaving of osiers, for their dexterity in which work the Britons were famous. Their boats, huts, quivers, and, some say, their idols, were made of wicker-work. With a bone needle and leathern thongs, she also sewed the skins procured in the chase and used for clothing. Never separated from her husband, she followed her humble duties, governed the children, and became the partner and soother of his toil. Such was the British bride and wife, notwithstanding the calumnies heaped upon them by the Romans, who had not the elevation of mind to appreciate the freedom, honour, and moral superiority of a nation whom they had conquered by the only art the Romans ever possessed—the art of war.



THE CHESTERFIELD LETTERS OF 1873.

By Lord G—H—.

LETTER I.

MY DEAR BOY,
 Your father asks me, as one of those dignified beings yclept men of the world, to instruct you in the 'art de plaisir,' or rather the art of extorting from society the admiration which makes success. I gladly sit down to write to you, à la Chesterfield, and you must remember that if I weary you it is for your own good in *this* world, a mighty different thing, and a more moving, than if it were only for your dim ultimate good that I wrote. *Imprimis*, my dear nephew, you must recollect that, in the world of fashion you are about to enter, our feelings are like fire—very good servants, but very bad masters; you can exert no sway over your fellow-men until you have absolute mastery over yourself; you can deceive no one else until you can deceive yourself; you can alter no other man's opinion until you have made your own as flexible as india-rubber. As long as you have leading-strings within, in the shape of scruples and conscientiousness, you must be content with a position very far inferior to that which I hope to see you attain. No matter what attractions, what talents, what genius in social management you may possess, the possibility of your being at any moment carried away by those 'dangerous guides, the feelings,' makes you unsafe—a *Megeira* with only a thin sheet of rust between you and the bottom. Therefore—and no words of mine could make this as plain as a few weeks in London will make

it—let it be your first care, in fitting yourself to take a fashionable position, to act from calculation, not from impulse, but to give the action the appearance of being prompted by impulse only. It is almost better to be impulsive than to seem cautious; and a suspicion of caution will easily alarm the rest of a false society in which each man hugs himself with the idea of being the wolf among the sheep, the knave among the fools. For it is a thing worthy of remark that no man willingly to himself ever owns to folly; while he admits his knavery with ease, nay, with pleasure. To outwit, no matter by what means, no matter for what ends, is the great art of society; get something by the craft if possible; but, at any rate, continue the process for practice, and because if you do not, you will be outwitted. There is no medium—nothing between the active and passive moods. It being admitted that this—to outwit—is the primary object of your education, it will at once strike you as all important to have a thorough knowledge of the instrument on which you are to perform; and although nothing but practice can render you perfect in the art, still a few hints on the mechanism of that instrument from an old performer will be of infinite service to you. Recollect that when I speak of 'men,' 'women,' 'the world,' &c., I allude only to those men and women and that world which inhabit the west corner of this dingy town. It is necessary for a man to have

friends; and it is necessary that those friends should, to a certain extent, believe in him, while he is perfectly cognizant of their foibles, and ready at any moment to divest himself of their friendship, should it grow inconvenient or useless. To be believed in by your friends, you must never become too intimate; a man is *not* a hero to his valet de chambre. (Heroes are, as Congreve says of women,

‘—Like tricks by sleight of hand,
Which to admire we should not understand.’

at least, not wholly). Never allow the warmth of friendship or of mutual confidence to make you forget that a man becomes your enemy when he knows one of your secrets; but, at the same time, it is impossible to attach a friend to you with the desirable firmness without a show of unlimited confidence, particularly when you and he are young and are bound to believe in Constancy and Truth, and the Love that passes the Love of women, &c. &c. This requires some art; for to make a confession which shall elicit both pity and admiration is a difficult matter: many a failure in life might be traced to unthinking confidences over a midnight cigar, while, on the other hand, the reserved man is looked upon as a dangerous enemy, and treated by all with a kind of armed neutrality.

Never, in talking to a man you wish to attach to yourself, forget for one moment his character and peculiarities. Should he be singularly modest and self-deprecating, flatter him—no one likes flattery from others so much as a modest man, for he cannot flatter himself. Should he be an ambitious man, let your constant endeavour be to impress him with the idea that your friendship will

be a help to him on his way up. Should he be sentimental, let those feelings or sentiments that you yourself keep under lock and key out for a holiday, and take care to show him how you can understand and sympathise with his feelings; carefully keeping just a little on an eminence of common-sense above him—for your sentimental man respects common-sense because he cannot quite understand it.

But to show you exactly the way to attach a friend would take a lifetime, and would comprise an epitome of mankind. Keep only this broad rule in your mind: always be a little *above* your friends—not enough for envy, but just sufficiently for power over them. A friend on an equality with you is a nuisance.

Three friends—intimates, I mean—are sufficient for you. Let one be fashionable, that is *répandu*, talked of, a member of good clubs, a favourite with smart women, a wearer of good clothes. Let one be clever, or have the art of appearing and being considered so: a Member of Parliament if possible, and there is no harm in his holding revolutionary political opinions; anything rebellious is taking, unless it is monotonous, like the Irish specimen. And let your third friend (mind, your *friend*; I am not thinking of love, or gallantry, or anything of that kind, for later letters will comprise that subject) be a middle-aged, well-positioned woman. This is most important; it is unusual, and raises you at once a little above the common herd of young men just come out. Women being all born professors of duplicity, it adds much towards the formation of your character, it softens away your school, or college, or barrack-room roughnesses and irregularities, it impresses your

young friends whose ideas of familiarity with the other sex are confined to the family circle and to the society of the 'half-world,' and it gives a precocious manliness and assurance to your carriage in society which goes farther towards success than all the other polite attributes put together. Vulgarly speaking, *gentle swagger* is perfectly irresistible. If the world is ill-natured enough to put a false construction on this friendship, so much the better for you; but let me insist once more that I mean it to be a *bond fide* friendship; if it were more it would be of no use to you. I need scarcely insist, to one so well brought up as you have been, on the absolute necessity of avoiding the society of needy men; that is, of course, of needy men who accept their position. Many poor men are a credit to the best society; but poverty, as a rule, is like lameness; you pity the one lamed by accident, but you have a disgust to him who was born with one leg shorter than the other. Besides, the man who does not take pains to hide his poverty, and to live as if he were not poor, offers an insult to the whole of well-to-do society which you are bound, in honour and good faith, to avenge by avoiding him. As to acquaintances, let every one be your acquaintance; be, if you can, all things to all men, and be careful to vary your style of address, nay, even your nod or gesture of salutation, as you meet in your walks 'a minister of State, a bishop, a philosopher, a captain, or a woman.' As Lord Chesterfield says, 'A man of the world must, like the chameleon, be able to take every hue;' and to extend your acquaintance, you must be prepared to be sentimental with a lady of fashion, bursting with Ruff's information with a sporting man, foolish with

a fool, amorous with a flirt, gossiping with an old woman, greedy with a gourmand, and silent with a talker.

Let me imagine you now fairly started in life; with three friends, with lodgings in St. James's Place or somewhere in the Club vicinity, with a passable appearance and carriage (the latter being of far the most importance), with good spirit, and with a ready but careful tongue, and a capacious but controllable heart. You must dress well. A few years ago this did not matter very much, and even now carelessness can be forgiven to some men; but a badly-dressed young man is heavily weighted, and will lose many good chances at the outset. A man who dresses carefully pays a compliment to society, and society is very grateful for small things; besides, men are as observant of each other's costumes as women, and seem somehow to lack that force of character which makes a well-dressed woman hated as well as admired by her female friends. Take Captain Sprigginson as an example. Sprig. is nice-looking; he talks with a drawl; he has lost most of his money on the turf; he is consistent in his vanities and charming little impertinences (such as his rule of being always half an hour late for dinner, &c.); he belongs to good clubs, and he says silly things with an air that makes them pass for witticisms: but do you think all these good qualities alone would have carried him into the position he holds in society? No—he has dressed himself to distinction. Some men are born smart, others achieve smartness, and others have it thrust upon them by their tailor. Sprig. was born smart; but he soon found out that smartness alone would not serve his turn; even the biggest flower and fullest

trousers will pall when the spring brings its hosts of similarly-attired military heroes. No: he must be peculiar; not eccentric, for eccentricity disgusts the even mediocrity of fashion; but simply peculiar, gently, hesitatingly original; enough to tickle but not enough to startle society's palate. Did others wear lower crowned hats than heretofore—an inch was stealthily added to Sprig's head-covering. Did little Sir Knight Teapot bring in tight trousers (that summer when our household troops took to driving about in gigs beside their grooms, like country doctors), Sprig, had his manly legs ensconced in double the cloth they formerly required. Were flowers in button-holes universal, Sprig, was never seen with one. Had an apparently pleasant change been made (many years ago) from severe strangulation to comfort and coolness in the region of the neck, Sprig, tied his heavy, sad-coloured scarf three times round. In short, Sprig, proclaimed himself, every morning when he dressed, as a being superior to ordinary fashion, while he loudly asserted that his only wish was to dress quietly and unostentatiously, and the world, ever willing to take a man at his own valuation, recognised in him, despite himself, the real nineteenth century edition of a man of fashion, the Brummel of our day. I have, indeed, heard it rumoured that there are moments of satiety, when not even all his clothes, artistically laid out around for him to choose for the day, can make Sprig, perfectly happy. There is a limit to human felicity; perfection, difficult as it is to gain, is not all honey when attained to: and Sprig, longing, like Cesar, for more worlds to conquer, must often feel that he has lived too late, and that his proper era was

that glorious time when ruffles and silken hose, and plum-colour and taffeta and golden brocade, and bejewelled hat, and lace and scent made a gentleman more gentlemanly than our broadcloth imagination can easily grasp an idea of.

Macaulay says of Byron, that under Charles I. he would have been more quaint than Donne; under Charles II. would have out-Bayesed Bayes and out-Bilboed Bilbo; under George I. have made Pope envious of his smooth correctness; and much the same may be said of the great man now under consideration. His braccae would have made even Roman swells envious, while the early Normans would have sighed to emulate his taste in the first gloves. Not even Henry V. would have had such craftily-peaked shoes: and who can say what would have been the glory of his ruffles and collars under good Queen Bess? Fancy his first pair of pantaloons when the French Sans-Culottes had brought them into wear! Ah! what a Macaroni he would have made! If you are capable of it, it would be well to dress after Captain Sprigginson, and at the same time to appear to be dressing *before* him. I will some day write, for your benefit, a treatise on the 'Theory of Man's Covering'—a philosophical review of the tailor's art—and then, perhaps, I shall be able to make you understand how it is possible for a clever man to grasp the *idea* of dress formed by a good dresser, and, by anticipating the action of that idea, to carry off all the honours of invention, and place the inventor in the position of adapter. Captain Sprigginson's style, however, requires a well-seasoned and deep-searching intellect to take it entirely in; and I should therefore rather offer to you as model Sir

Knight Teapot, whom I have already mentioned in this letter.

Sir Knight Teapot (to quote Swift, 'a forked, straddling animal, with bandy legs') is essentially what not the most refined of our fair friends would call 'a dressy man,' and of 'the haw-haw style.' He is naturally little, insignificant, and worthless; he is artificially great, important, and a leader of men. Whereas the generality of men rely mostly upon their faces for their expression of different emotions, Sir Knight Teapot uses his legs for that purpose. His only emotions are those which can easily, to their deepest depths, be shown in TROUSERS; and therefore, in the consideration of such men as Sir Knight Teapot, trousers must occupy a very prominent place. To the philosopher all things are important that tend to elucidate anything. It is confidently reported that this baronet commenced life with loose trousers; it is even said that once upon a time, in a short interval of honeymoon, when he allowed the charms of a young wife to come between him and his trousers, he has had them baggy at the knee. Nay, detraction has gone so far as to assert that there have been rare moments of late when the claims of horses, of women, of racing, have made him indifferent to, or ignorant of, an ignoble wrinkle over the foot; but I never believe the whole of the bad I hear. There is great character in his dress: the trousers clinging to the shapely leg, the determined clutch they have of the boot at the bottom, the 'je ne sais quoi' of gentility and high birth about his lower man, bespeak the nature that subdues and reigns. Far more than his good horses, his passable dinners, his well-appointed house, his grand friends, his amiable and prudently-blind wife, his well-

chosen amours, his thorough well-to-do-ness, has the intense tightness about the legs tended to make him a great man in the world. His tailor is a more eminent man than many an ill-dressed gentleman; and Sir Knight does honour to his doubtful ancestry, and hides most effectually any hair upon his heels by the magnificence of the apparel that issues from Mr. Green's of Princess's Street, Hanover Square. You will, my dear boy, when you have got over the natural disgust and tendency to laughter he will excite in you, find it a useful thing to take him in some measure as your guide in the great art of dress. He is one of our original dress-thinkers.

One more example of men whose externals are copiable, and I dismiss this frivolous subject—for frivolous it is, and therefore important. Lord Boysterous is a walking exaggeration, and therefore, in copying him (that is, in copying his idea, not his actual dress), you must be careful not to run into simple burlesque. He (Lord B.) is the travesty of a gentleman. The curl of his hat is a joke; the flower in his button-hole is a screaming farce; his waist is a bad pun; and his trousers are the breakdown finale; but nevertheless the *tout ensemble*, if it escapes ridicule, commands admiration. He is superlative; and to be superlative is something. His clothes are newer, his hat shinier, his boots more pointed, his flower larger, his gloves yellower, his cane more expensive, his hair more brushed, his whole appearance more bandboxial than any one else's; therefore he is a success. He has been laughed at; but he has persisted, and laughter has turned to admiration, for ridicule is murdered by consistency. He is a great man, and worthily so. His dress has won him position,

place, fame, nay, sanctity, for is he not what Carlyle calls 'a witness and living martyr to the eternal worth of clothes?' and he may well lay claim to the position of philanthropist, for he makes the simple to wonder, the cynical to sneer, the indifferent to laugh, the envious feel capable of performance, and helps towards Mr. Poole's elevation to the position of 'hierophant and hierarch, or even the god of mankind.'

The mention of Lord Boysterous has made me a little incoherent, I fear; but there is something in his noisy, flashy brightness that confuses the senses, and drives a lover of the unities wild with mingled perplexity, admiration, and pain. I now, my dear nephew, consider that you are dressed, and stepping out of your well-furnished lodgings (taste in furniture is important; but the taste of a good upholsterer will do for the present) with your soul like that of an old knight—

'Aflame already for what may come.'

And, as the fact of what 'set' you had joined would naturally determine the direction in which you would turn your feet, I come to the difficult and important subject of choosing your 'set,' or your society in society. I have been, for the last few years, so little in the world, or, at least, behind the curtain, that my remarks on this subject will be brief, and general, rather than particular. Broadly, society may be divided into the following sets:—

1. The Godly Goodly set.
2. The Godless Goodly set.
3. The Fast and Fashionable set.
4. The Fast and Loose set.

The Godly Goodly set we all know; and it is well to be intimate with some of the members. There are many dukes and duchesses in it; in fact, a duke or duchess has a

kind of prescriptive or hereditary right therein. Many old ladies of high birth meander, through paths of doubtful propriety and black sloughs of disrepute, into it at last; many young women of position find themselves in it, and are too lazy or too stupid ever to get out. And indeed the Godly Goodly set has its relaxations—relaxations terrible, thunderous, Jove-like—the vagaries of virtue, the recreations of respectability, the awful sports of morality. There is something fine about this set; they are conscientious, and therefore curiosities; they are seldom ill-natured for ill-nature's sake; and I believe that, like the boil which, we are told, carries off our bad blood and saves us from worse things, they do good to society, and keep up that outward appearance of decency and morality which serves to make the reality I—and you soon, dear boy—know so much more enticing and enjoyable. Without the Godly Goodly set our society would be French, or, rather, Italian, at once, and our amusements would lose their highest merit—being wrong in an imaginary world's eye. The world's eye really is a pitiful minority—the Godly Goodlies, who are only allowed to look on at all to make the game more amusing.

The Godless Goodly set is a large one, and an uninteresting. It is the heavy ballast of society, the stick-jaw pudding for the plums to shine in. It is made up of many small sets, and yet forms a great dinner-giving, drum-going, outwardly-respectable, censorious, ill-natured, smart set of its own, in which peers, shopkeepers and swindlers jostle each other, and which, to the eye of the uninitiated, represents the whole of society.

Respectability is the watchword of the Godless Goodlies; and this

makes the great difference between it and the Fast and Fashionable set, which has reformed itself out of the power of that envious pleasure-spoiler and openly boasts of deeds which a few years ago its members would have left entirely to the 'half-world.' This set you will know well enough soon, I trust, my dear nephew, for it is most beneficial to be of it; and I will no further describe it at present beyond saying that the peculiarities of its members are a taste for childish romping and barge-horseplay, combined with a total disregard not only for all morality, but also for all decency of appearance. You will observe the lovely Duchess of Birmingham, so pale and haughty, suddenly jumping over chairs with all the *abandon* of a schoolboy, or flinging bread about the dinner-table with shrieks of delight. The Marquis of —— will allow his gallant feelings to have vent in the public tickling of Mrs. G——, while that exquisite woman of fashion will roll on the ground and roar with all the pretty consciousness of twelve years of age, although she weighs twelve stone and has achieved her thirty-seventh birthday. With this refined set a slap in the face takes the place of graceful epigram, a punch in the ribs serves for sparkling repartee; dinner conversation is pleasantly supplied by cutlets flung across the table and kicks administered beneath; while licence in conversation is only equalled by licence in behaviour, and the goodness of a story is measured by its breadth.

You may, perhaps, find it difficult to believe that a society in which the women employ the little talent heaven has given them in striving to appear a mixture of barmaid and *Anonymous*, and the men look upon a slap on the back as a delicate compliment to a lady,

and a yawn in her face as a witicism, is the best of all possible societies for you to enter; but it most certainly is so—the highest personages in the land are the heads thereof—and I dare say that, when you have got over the natural repulsion such people give rise to on a first acquaintance, you will find the whole thing vastly entertaining, and become shortly as witty as the rest, and as refined. There is no rose without a thorn; and though the simple pleasures of puss-in-the-corner, kiss-in-the-ring, hunt-the-slipper, apple-pie-bed-making, Vance's songs, and Bubby Shenstone's buffooneries may sometimes pall, you must recollect that this is, after all, but a small price to pay for being of the smart smartest, for jostling distinguished persons in familiar intercourse, perhaps for being styled 'the great,' and for being envied by all, and most of all by those who pretend most to disapprove. 'You must renounce Courts if you will not connive at knaves, and tolerate fools,' says Chesterfield. I know nothing of Courts; but I am sure, my dear nephew, you will see the necessity for not allowing any dislike to vulgarity or inanity to stand in the way of your joining the most distinguished society we perhaps have ever witnessed in our metropolis.

The Fast and Loose set you will carefully avoid. It consists of those who have attempted to join the Fast and Fashionables, but have achieved only the fastness; and immorality without a gloss-over it is hideous to the immoral. They are also those who, having put their hand to the plough, have looked back to Respectability, and are therefore most justly execrated on both sides. Poor devils! they can neither return to the white fold, nor will the black sheep with gilt tails receive them. Vic-

times of hesitation or half-heartedness, wretched beings doomed to be always second-rate, they find out too late that to be wicked with impunity one must be great, and to be wicked with pleasure one must enjoy wickedness. Keep clear of these people, my dear boy, for they carry with them a moral taint, and are almost infectious.

For my opening letter, I think this is enough. I have now shortly pointed out to you my ideas as to your dress, your intimates, and the set into which you

should strive to enter. In my next letter I propose to plunge boldly into the vortex with you, accompany you to a ball or two, and sit with you some sunny afternoon in the Park, while I trust I shall find time to give you some useful hints as to your conduct with the fair sex, and arm you sufficiently to enable you, young as you are, to hold your own where cavaliers

'Strive who shall be the ablest man
At right gallanting of a fan.'

Your affectionate uncle,

G — H — .



FROM WORLD TO WORLD.

I.

THE hills now wear their summer crown
 Of grove and thicket green ;
 The sun rains diamonds on the sea
 Fair-smiling and serene ;
 On sapphire wavelets luminous
 There sparkle multitudinous
 The sun gems crystalline.
 Beneath this vault of radiant sky,
 Beside this laughing sea,
 I, only, sigh ' How long, O love,
 Before thou com'st to me ?'
 I only sad where all is gay,
 See wintry-eyed the summer day
 That brings no news of thee.
 O my heart's life ! come back to me,
 Thy love most desolate !
 Come back to me who wearily
 Alone thy coming wait.
 My heart forlorn seems nigh to burst,
 My soul is starving in its thirst
 For thee its only mate !
 I cry thy name ; thou hearest not ;
 I call on thee in vain ;
 The slow days wear away. How long
 Before thou com'st again ?

II.

The dusky veil of twilight sinks
 Upon the land and sea ;
 The wind sweeps o'er the surge that swells
 And thunders tunefully ;
 The grand storm-voices are akin,
 Sea waves and sea winds mingling in
 One great wild harmony.
 I know that now in vain indeed
 I watch by sea and shore ;
 I know thou canst not come to me
 Nor now, nor evermore ;

That in the silent grave and chill
Lies all earth holds of thee. Yet still
I call thee—I implore !
Can human soul from human soul
Be wholly shut apart ?
Does no bridge link this world of ours
With thine, where'er thou art ?
From the dark grave can no faint ray,
No tone, no token, find a way
From heart to longing heart ?
O send me but a glimpse, a voice
In winds, or streams, or sea !
By night or day, in life or dreams,
Send but a sign to me !

III.

Along the sea horizon far
The sunset glory glows ;
Through lakes of liquid gold a stream
Of royal crimson flows ;
The large slow ocean-ripples move,
Pale-tinged from the rich dyes above
Faint amber and dim rose.
I watch, with tranquil eyes and soul,
The tranquil twilight sea ;
The balmy breeze of eventide
Breathes peace and love to me,
Although my prayer has not been heard,
Although no message and no word
Nor sign has come from thee.
Where oft I wandered desolate,
Tear-blinded and alone,
Now, dreaming of the coming hours,
I smile to think of one
When I shall cross the bridge at last
From world to world that thou hast past,
And find thee still my own ;
When we two meet at that far goal
Of perfect love and rest,
Where lie beyond the glorious sun,
The islands of the blest.

I. H.



Y THE SORRY
PALS

BACHELOR

A FEW OF MY
LANDLADY'S
DAUGHTERS

MORE
LANDLADIES

THIS IS THE WAY HE SPENDS THE OTHER HALF.

RING AWAY OLD MAN
DO YOU GOOD

Long, you thank
you're

TRAITOR THE MUCH-ABUSED
BOY CAT WHO EATS
THE GOOD COLLARS
GET HARD AND THAT
LOST SMOKES



HERALDIC BUTTER.

THE powdered hair of the Garner King will stand erect when he is told there is but a step between Heraldry and Butter. To quarter yellow eightpenny on the escutcheon of the noblest of sciences will bring syncope on Sir Bernard Burke and his brothers-in-arms (Mr. Planché will forgive the pun for the sake of old times). The retired tobacconist whose brand-new crest was defaced with the motto, *Quid rides?* was the victim of a joker too ribald to be tolerated more than once in a century. And even though the noble house of Fortescue adorns its coronet with such a legend as *Forte Scutum salus ducum*, a well-balanced mind would shrink with not less horror from an edition of *Longinus* edited by Josh Billings than from an alliance between the flippancy of burlesque and the antique stateliness of the Guild of Arms. Therefore no trifling is intended in this paper: Heraldic Butter is an historic institution.

Heraldry, I am told, has a formidable pedigree of its own. A most respectable chronicler informs me that 'The first souveraine that ever gave coate of armes to his soldiers was King Alexander the Great, who, after the manner of his ancestors, desirous to exalt by some speciall meanes of honor his stoutest capitaines and soldiers above the rest, to provoke them to encounter their inimies with manly courage, and by the advice of Aristotle, he gives unto the most valiant of his armies certain signes or emblemes, to be painted upon their armours, banners, and pennons, as tokens of their service in his wars.' Clark, in his 'Introduction,' and Mark Antony Lower, in his 'Curiosities,'

assure me that a knowledge of heraldry is essential to the antiquarian, the historian, the poet, the painter, and the romancist; and Mr. Lower routs all carping critics by arraying Spenser, Chaucer, Drayton, Scott, and Shakespeare amongst the notable folk who have been of his way of thinking. But, just as 'they didn't know everything down in Judee,' so the necessity of the lordly science in the dairy has been ignored by the Heralds' College.

'Manye merveylles there ben in that regioun,' was the remark of Sir John Mandeville, when he had explored Heraldom, and made acquaintance with rampant dragons, couchant griffins, and passant mermaids. Indeed, a man who has grown familiar with such creatures as the lamyas—each of them a compound of woman, lion, dragon, dog, horse, and goat—cannot have much astonishment to spare, and would scarcely condescend to wag his eyelid at sight of Othello's 'anthropophagi, and men whose heads do grow between their shoulders.' Nevertheless, I venture to say that my own particular school of heraldry, which is situated in a back-yard, and the learned professor who, in a dirty apron and rolled-up shirt-sleeves, with an ancient and snuff-dusted waistcoat for a tabard, presides over the mysteries and moulds the destinies of Heraldic Butter, are greater 'merveylles' than Sir John Mandeville ever beheld. The merit of this discovery belongs to me; and although some German philosopher will doubtless try to flinch my honours when my achievements shall grow famous, I am the Columbus of butter-mould heraldry, the Darwin of the na-

tural selection which has produced the Dairy King-at-Arms.

I met this phenomenon first on a gloomy summer day in the West, when the sou'-wester deluge, breaking on the slopes of Dartmoor, had converted the Garden of England into a rich pre-Adamite puddle. The enjoyment of agricultural inquiry, when it is pursued through extemporised quagmires and exaggerated bogs, demands a degree of bucolic enthusiasm to which I make no pretension; and it was with a sense of ineffable satisfaction that, having escaped from fat shorthorns, steam-ploughs, monster mangold-wurzels, and patent manures, I endeavoured to drain the slough from my limbs upon the clean straw of the butter-mould carver's booth. The young man in charge of the shed had none of the outward signs of genius; or it may be that I lacked the discerning eye. He was quick and keen, as became a Londoner stranded amongst bumpkins; and he had evident pride in the works of art by which he was surrounded. They were the products of his own labour and his own skill, and they were creditable to both. Out of the commonest parts of wood his knife and graver, his turning tools and sand-paper, had developed moulds and prints of infinite diversities of pattern, wherewith to ornament and beautify the pounds and pints and yards of butter with which dairymen and dairy-wives are wont to tempt the market and the appetite. Those productions did not appeal to the aestheticism of my nature; or perhaps they did appeal, and I had no aesthetic faculty. I may have realised that a pat of butter neatly moulded in a symmetrical circle, and impressed upon the surface with the semblance of a rose, or the outline of a daisy-leaf, would be more grateful to the eye than

the unshapely and uncleanly dabs of grease with which they spoil one's appetite at Mrs. Todger's. The sort of toy with which a gentleman's monogram, intertwined with tendrils of the vine, or reposing in the bosom of a lily, could be made to show itself upon the contents of his butter-cooler, fresh and suggestive at each morning's meal, may have suggested to me then that the Beautiful could be made Useful, even in regard to affairs so vulgar as eating. But, with shame let me confess, I remained in outer heathen ignorance of the potent forces of romance and poetry which struggled for expression in my benefactor's store of prints and shapes and butter-moulds. Still, he who has compassion upon a forlorn urban victim of ultra-suburban sludge, and shows his sympathy by rubbing him down with clean straw, has, at least, a lien upon one's gratitude. I daresay the unlucky Israelite who came to grief on the road to Jericho would have admired whatever the Good Samaritan had to sell, so long as his remembrance of the oil and wine and the twopence remained keen. At all events, I showed more interest in the theory of butter and its decoration during that half-hour than in the whole previous course of my life. If I afterwards forgot the artist who had enlightened me—well, there have been greater sinners than I in that regard. Have not some statesmen and some potentates been known to neglect, or even to ignore, the genius of heaven-born inventors, until Death vouchsafed his patent?

I go no longer to agricultural shows; but I have been to the College of Heraldic Butter—the headquarters of Dairy King-at-Arms. Its locality is not attractive, nor is its architecture im-

posing. Hay-waggons, beerhouses, and barbaric youth, rather than soul-elevating associations, pervade the neighbourhood. Dubiously wandering out of the dingiest of London streets into the shabbiest lane in that part of Vestrydom, I found the inscription I sought written in rude characters on a back-yard gate. Knocking being a supererogatory work, I pushed open the door, picked my way through heaps and stacks of what looked like firewood 'in the raw,' and arrived at a miniature carpenter's shop, wherein the king was prosecuting his craft. He was habited as I have described him, and appeared to be fabricating wooden drinking-cups without bottoms, with the aid of a lathe. So close behind him as almost to fit into his spine, was a joiner's bench. Here were chisels, planes, saws, and an axe; two or three bulky volumes of such lore as makes the names of Lodge, De-brett, and Robson illustrious; a store of plaster of Paris and plastic wax, and sundry cabinets, containing moulds of royal and corporate seals, imperial and national medals, military insignia, and noble and gentle coats-of-arms. In one corner was a powerful wood-chopping lever; in another a glass case like an embryo museum of heraldry; in a third a heap of butter-stamps; and in a fourth a wood-engraver's bench; fitted with the tools of the art, and also with an assortment of drawing materials. In point of size, it was a very 'one-horse' affair indeed; but it seemed to be even superabundantly supplied with furniture.

'All alone?' I inquired.

'You behold the complete establishment—the firm and all,' was the reply.

'Do you mean to say you contrive to do all your work yourself, and to do it all here?'

'Just so. I'm my own buyer:

bought all that box, and deal, and pine, and oak, and willow, and all the other varieties of wood that you see piled up and lying about there in the yard. I'm my own sawyer and wood-cutter; and when I'm tired of more mental exercise, I can relieve my mind by taking a turn at this kind of amusement.' [His muscular arm drove the chopper through a huge block of deal.] 'I'm my own turner, as you saw when you came in. I'm my own designer; and, in short, my own everything. I make my own drawings, draught 'em on the blocks I made myself, engrave 'em with my own hands, pack 'em and sell 'em; and then I collect my own money, and I spend it. There's nothing done by deputy here, I assure you.'

I ventured to express the obvious reflection that it was a strange business.

'You may say so,' he remarked. 'It is queer. Everything about it is queer.'

He was back at the lathe now; and, as the wheel spun furiously, and the chips and spiral shavings flew around him in showers and coils, I marvelled at the dexterous celerity with which he conjured uncouth blocks into elegant and shapely cups and moulds and caskets.

'You want to see the process?' he resumed, interpreting correctly my curious and attentive gaze. 'Well, this is the rough work. These are what any well-trained turner could make as well as me. Yes, you understand that much; though, mind you, I've some tools here that a good many first-rate workmen would be glad to get hold of. Now, watch this.'

The hollow cylinder of wood was twirling madly in mid air, when he seized an instrument whose like is seldom to be seen out of a surgeon's operating-case

passed it quickly into the orifice, brought all his force to bear upon it for a couple of seconds, and—*presto!*—the cylinder was transformed into a gracefully rifled shell or tube. Still whirling and spinning like a thing of life, it yielded its outer skin to a hard, bright chisel, which wrought in its cuticle as it spun fantastic figures and intertwining lines of beauty.

‘There,’ said he, as he released his victim, ‘that’ll do for a sheath. But you asked about the stamps. Well, first of all, I get an order from my lord this, or the duke of that, or plain mister somebody-else, who wants to see all his honours printed on his butter at breakfast-time, or on his salt at dinner. No, of course, it isn’t everybody that has a proper coat-of-arms; nor everybody knows he has one when he’s got it. But everybody who sends to me for my style of goods takes it for granted that he’s got as good a right to one as the Duke of Norfolk, and expects me to know all about it. Besides, you mustn’t disappoint your customers; and there’s very few people with any name at all that can’t be fitted very easily. Suppose your good lady, now, has been out to see some friends that use my butter-prints, and she thinks you ought to be able to be as fine as them. Very well; you come to me. Very likely your name’s Smith; then you’re all right. Smith’s safe for a good selection of coats-of-arms, most of ‘em showy; an’ you can take your choice, so long as you pay me and the Chancellor of the Exchequer. Satisfy us two, and there’ll be no more trouble. But every name isn’t so aristocratic as Smith. Suppose you’re a Herring: there was a great painter or two called Herring; but you’d scarcely expect to find a name like

that in heraldry. Yet, you’ll find in the books that you’ve got a shield and three little fishes on it, if you only know how to look. Same with Butler—three cups. But that’s what we call “canting,” that is; and it’s the only sort of cant I ever knew to be respectable.’

‘You must know a good deal about heraldry, I suppose, to prevent mistakes,’ said I.

‘Ah! more’n you’d think. Why, I’ve often been asked for a crest that I couldn’t find, and the people who had worn it for years couldn’t tell anything about it. I always fall back on seals then. “Send me an impression of your seal in wax—outside a letter, if you like,” say I; and if it comes, I go to work. If not, I go to work all the same; but it isn’t quite so easy.’

A vague recollection of a couplet of Brathwait’s, in Yorke’s ‘Union of Honour,’ came into my mind; and I said—

‘They weare theire grandſire’s ſignet on
their thumb,
Yet aſk them whence their crest is,
they are *num.*’

But the Dairy King-at-Arms did not value the happy quotation as I thought he might have done.

‘No,’ he resumed, ‘it’s not easy at all times. Suppose you send a note to me for a Clive crest. Well, first of all, I naturally say to myself, “Clive: oh, that’s argent, on a fess sable, with three mullets.” Even if I’m right, there’s a difficulty at starting. Some people put stars for mullets an’ mullets for stars; although any fool might know a mullet could only have five points, like this,’ [he cut it with his chisel as he spoke]—‘and a star can have six, or eight, or more. Not that I should be likely to make a blunder that way. But see here:

there's four or five Clives in heraldry, an' how am I to know which lot I've got to stamp butter for? There's the Earl Powis branch: they're Clive; and they wear a griffin passant, argent, ducally gorged, gules. There's another family, that carry a horse's head, sable, between two wings, argent; or, a right hand holding a buckle. And then there's the Cheshire and Salop Clives, with an awful deal of choice. They've got a griffin passant, wings indorsed, argent, langued, gules, and ducally gorged; and they would seem to have some claim on a boar's head, erased at neck, sable; with a Latin motto besides—"Credo, ama et regna," I think it is. Now, what I say is—any man with a crest like that must have a history belonging to him somewhere, and he's morally bound to know something about it; because he'll be in a rare way if I can't be sure who he is, at the price he pays, which ain't much. Classic scholar? No; can't say I am. But it don't much matter. Most of the mottoes are plain enough. You only want to be sure of the spelling. Strange things—some o' those mottoes. There's the Duke of Leinster's—"Crom a boo," which sounds for all the world like a nigger rhyme to Timbuctoo.'

I suggested that it was an old Irish war-whoop; whereupon he was pleased to say he should think it wouldn't be amiss for such a purpose as that.

'Yes, they're not all easy to understand. There's the Dukes o' Bedford—"Che dara, dara;" which means (so the books say), "What will be, will be;" whatever that may amount to. But two of the greatest puzzles I ever came across are the Derbyshire Dakynses—"Strike Dakyns; the Devil's in the Hempe;" and the Dorsetshire

Martins—"He who looks at Martin's ape, Martin's ape shall look at him"—an' I'm blest if the crest isn't a monkey with a collar on, sitting on the stump of a tree and grinning at himself in a looking-glass! But it's all right,' he said, resuming the lost thread, 'all right when once you've got hold of the real thing. So long as you're safe within the mark, an extra bezant or escarp, or a little neat embellishment of a chevron, or a bend, with a full description thrown in in words, without sparing the vairs an' counter-vairs, and gules and purpure, an' ermine, and potent-counter-counters, where they can be brought in, pleases *them* and hurts nobody. And, as I was saying, when one o' the family's got it, all the rest 'll come after it for their own use; and envy makes trade.'

'Then you're pretty sure of finding a crest sooner or later for a customer?' I hinted.

'Oh, yes! why not? Why, the Boke of St. Alban's declares there was an order of heraldry among the angels in heaven, an' it's still complete, only so far as Lucifer and the other devils fell an' broke their escutcheons; and there's an old party, named Morgan, that says Adam wore a plain shield, gules, in Paradise, and had a right to wear Eve's arms as well, which was a shield argent, or scutcheon of pretence, she being an heiress.'

'Of sorrow, perhaps?'

'Ay, I daresay. She had trouble enough with her boys, if we're to believe all we hear: though the same old fellow I'm telling you of says Abel bore his orders quarterly, ensigned with a bishop's crozier, to show he was a shepherd; which is a trifle more than I can believe.'

He had by this time taken from his pocket a signet ring, the principal figure on which was a mild

and rather comic lion. Doubling a sheet of white paper, he drew on one face of it this lion's profile; then, with a pair of scissors, cut out two paper portraits of the animal, as the ebony-artists used to limn our features for a penny a head in the days of our youth. These he separated, using each for a guide to his pencil, as he traced the outline severally on two discs of fine-grained wood. That done, he sat down to his graving tools; and speedily completed two moulds, or stamps, which fitted each other with such exactness that any mass of plaster, wax, or butter, being pressed between them, would form a lion's figure, capable of sitting upright and supporting itself by its own weight. I saw then that my artist in arms was master of a sort of sculpture, by the aid of which a proud patrician might secure a new figure of his especial rampant dragon at each day's morning meal, and annihilate him with a butter-knife without fear of damaging his own hereditary nobility.

' Does it ever seem strange to you to be turning and engraving heraldic signs to be printed on butter?' said I.

' You mean—Don't I think I degrade heraldry?' he answered, rather fiercely. ' No, I don't. Butter's as old as coats-of-arms—older, if I can understand anything; and I suppose you won't deny it's as useful. Now, what's your notion of the antiquity of heraldry?'

I made some remark applying to the crusades.

' Oh, yes,' said he; ' I'll grant you as much as you like about the Templars and Hospitallers. I'll even throw in Peter the

Hermit, an' suppose he bore a shield, azure, an' three sandals on a bend, argent—if that'll do you any good. As to Butter: I'll tell you what I think about that. Butter's one o' the ancientest things out. The Greeks had it. So had the Romans. And if they did only use it in their baths, as a sort of ointment, wasn't that as good as they ever did with their heraldry? Besides, the Greeks got it from the Scythians and the Phrygians, and that sort o' people; just as the Romans did from the Goths and Vandals, which I suppose would be Germans nowadays. Didn't the old Jews eat butter? An' who ever heard of David having his bearings on his shield?—let alone Aaron and Moses; unless the Urim and the Thummim was something worn quarterly; in which case I'll wager it was gules: there was blood enough going about that time. And if we don't get such butter in these days—if it's adulterated with saltpetre and Spanish salt and lactate of zinc—well: isn't the nobility of arms adulterated with all sorts of bar-sinisters an' shoddy? If heraldry would make my bread as sure as butter does, I'd perhaps be more civil; but it won't. Carrot-juice and annatto only give the butter a better colour for blazoning in or; while peerage-adulteration seems likely to spoil the "lordly science," as you call it, altogether. So, now you know my opinion.'

I did; and as I went away, I wondered whether, if the fifty thousand tons of butter supposed to be used in London, or carried through it every year, could all be made heraldic, my Dairy King-at-Arms would be a richer or a happier man.

J. DUNNING.

IN THE SEASON.

FROM the north downwards,
 Travelling townwards,
 She, in the lap of luxury nurs'd ;
 I, in my rusty coat,
 Keep in my place remote ;
 I in the second class, she in'the first.

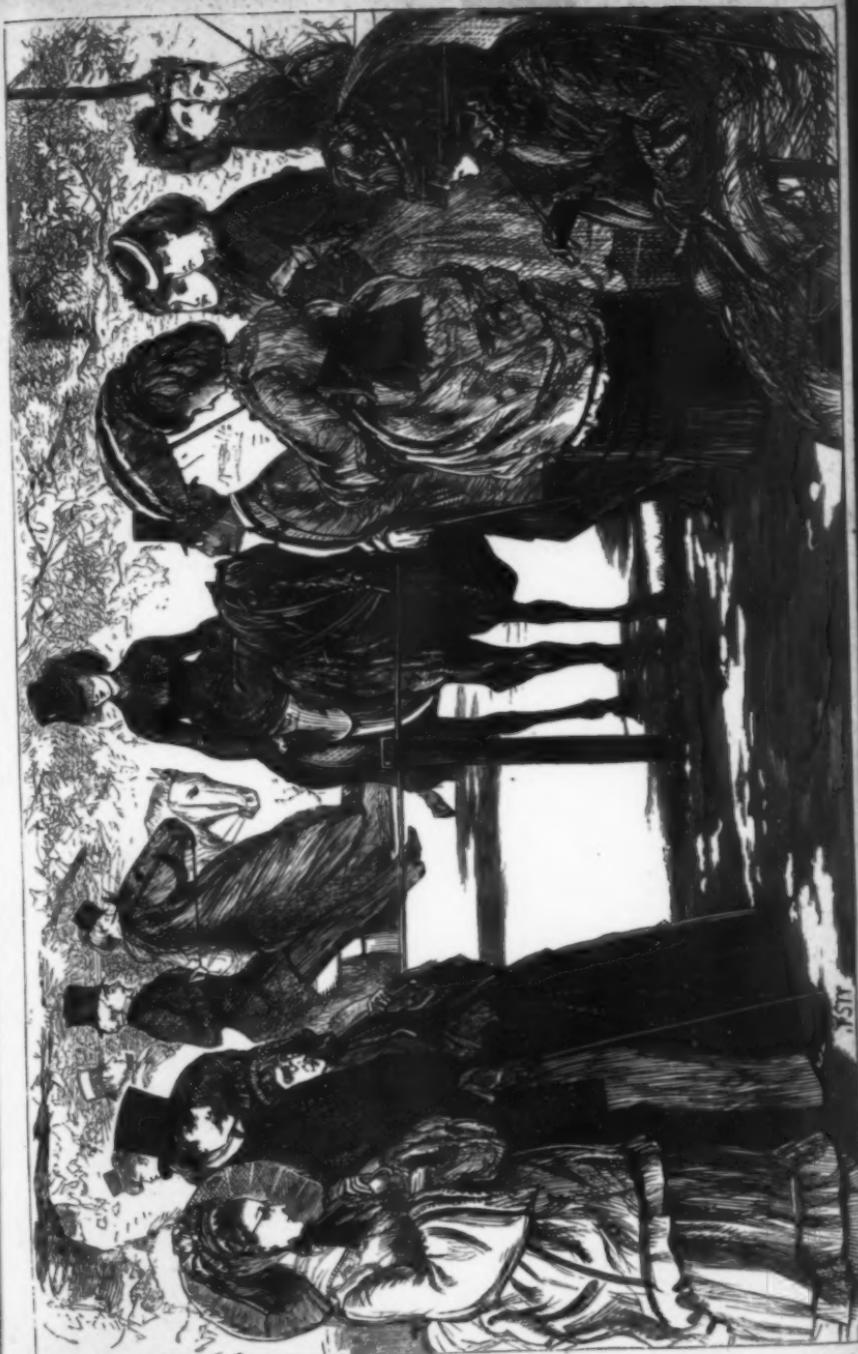
Habit well fitting,
 Perfectly sitting,
 She, in the Row, is in pleasure immers'd ;
 While 'mid earth's workers I
 Toil—oft impatiently ;
 I in the second class, she in the first.

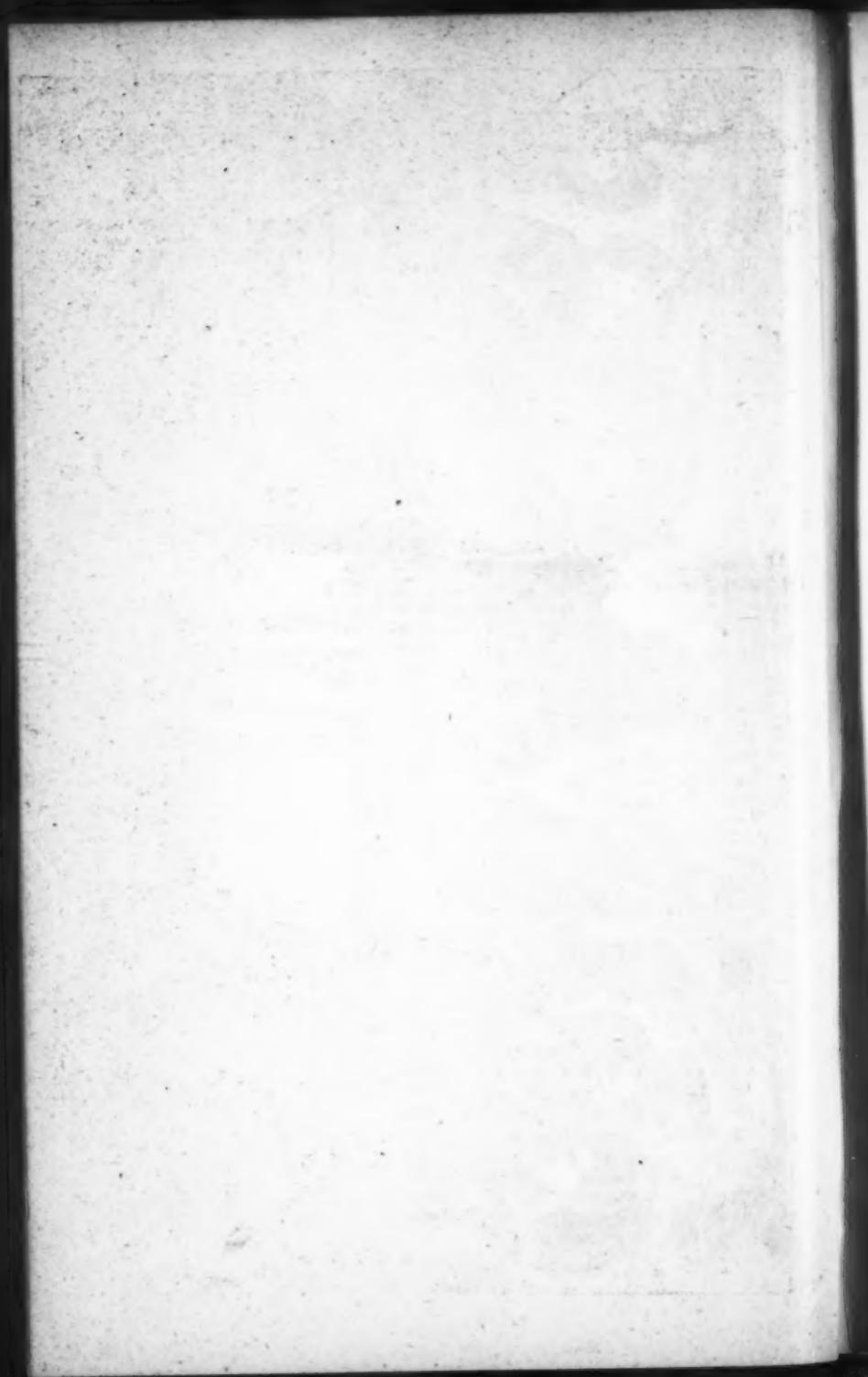
Sunlight declining,
 Finds her reclining,
 Driving Society's drive (oft rehears'd) ;
 I o'er the railing
 Glance (all else failing) ;
 I in the second class, she in the first.

Her veins are azure blue,
 Mine run a ruddy hue ;
 I, as plebeian, am doubly accurst ;
 Can rank and beauty, say,
 Mix with the *canaille*? Nay ;
 Ours is the second class, theirs is the first.

O for fraternity !
 O for equality !
 Anything, everything, if but I durst
 Ask her to come to me,
 Love, wife, and all to be ;
 So one, I care not, or second or first.

LONGWOOD.





A GOOD MATCH.

I AM rather inclined to think that, with many of the people who take an annual holiday, the pleasures of anticipation generally exceed those of fulfilment. Anticipation shows the quaintly-picturesque Norman village, the novelty and beauty of Alpine peaks, Welsh hills and valleys, or Scottish highlands, as the case may be, utterly ignoring the detracting annoyances of the channel passage—a very serious matter to many—the various difficulties of travel in a strange land, the often unsatisfactory *cuisine*, and the unconscionable length and playful variety of the rapidly-accumulating bills.

'Ad ogni uccello
Suo nido è bello,'

is the burden of how many a returning traveller?

The season was drawing to a close, and already the earlier birds had departed; the tourist was beginning to crop up in strange localities, and the British lodging-house keeper, sniffing the battle afar off, to prepare for war with her natural enemies, the visitors, groups of whom I found scattered about the Euston Station as I comfortably ensconced myself in the corner of a carriage bound for Staverton Towers.

A very few months back, Clement Sandering, with whom I was going to stay, had been living in town on a comparatively small income, which he had augmented, in a somewhat desultory way, by literary work. He had written a novel, a successful comedy, an endless variety of articles on an endless variety of subjects, and was looked on as rather a rising man. Probably he had never heard of Staverton

Towers, when one morning, amongst the letters and papers which burdened his table, was a note from a firm of lawyers in the City to tell him that the Towers, and a rather extensive property in Meadshire, belonged to him. Sandering had met with such things in the realms of fiction, and the intimation seemed rather like the foundation of a plot for a novel than a real and a veritable possibility. It was true, however; a distant relative of the late owner had died childless in Paris, and within a very short time Sandering had resigned his chambers and left town.

In the former days I had vaguely hovered during the season round a certain Gertrude Leigh, Sandering manifesting a slight disposition to admire her sister Bell. All this was entirely hopeless, for there was not the very remotest chance of old Sir Thomas consenting, even if the girls had wished it; and Lady Leigh would probably have had fits if the subject had been mentioned to her. The affair was not very serious on my part, nor, as I think, on Sandering's, though some of his heroines bore a suspicious resemblance to the fair Bell; but, then, what would you have? one must get his heroines from somewhere, for pictures painted without models are seldom satisfactory. Circumstances alter cases, however, and his circumstances had very materially altered the case. Since his accession he had been in Paris, where I knew the Leighs were also staying, and though his letters had not said anything particularly pointed, it was evident that they were much together, and only natural to suspect that some

thing would come of it—the usual something. Immediately on his return he had written to ask me down; there was no one with him, he said, and if I had work to do it would be much quieter than the chambers; so taking a heap of paper to try and ease a conscience which demanded industry, and secretly resolving to do nothing but lie under the trees and smoke, I started, anxious to see Sandering, in case his bachelor days were soon to be ended; for marriage sometimes alters a man very considerably, and a young wife has not always an enthusiastic affection for her husband's bachelor friend.

He met me at the station, and we drove through some of the prettiest scenery in Meadshire to the Towers. The fine old house was a striking contrast to the dingy chambers; as was the small army of men about the place, gardeners, grooms, and the rest, to the dilapidated old woman and small boy who had attended him in times of yore; but he had fallen quite naturally into the new habits and interests, and it seemed years since the old London days.

After dinner we retired to a small room to smoke, and discuss all that had happened since we last met.

'And how are things theatrical?' he asked, when he had given me details of his journeying.

'Much as they were when you left, I think; and, in one way, as they will be always. The good pieces pay; the bad ones don't. Isn't the same principle carried out in everything? If managers produce good pieces, publishers good works, or publicans good beer, the people go, and read, and drink, remuneratively. All the same, I suppose, we are to understand that the drama is declining?'

'That's the silliest cry of all,' Sandering answered. 'There are plenty of good actors, and plenty of good plays. I don't mean to say that the whole thing is in a perfectly satisfactory state. A number of gentlemen, and some ladies, adopt the profession now, and study it; but many fellows go on the stage with the idea that the art of acting can be learned any morning before breakfast, and, under the impression that "ease" is the great requisite, behave in drawing-rooms with the sort of ease that City clerks exhibit in their favourite liquor-shops. I remember one of the best actors in England telling me that when he first went on, he was convinced that he could play Hamlet perfectly; but after twenty years' experience, he should be thoroughly contented if his Laertes satisfied himself.'

'But there is a bigger blot on the stage than what old actors call the "cuff-shooters." Look in the photograph shop windows,' I replied.

'Yes, at the—those—the—well, the "popular actresses." Popular actresses—my stars! As you know, I am very far from being a straight-laced moralist, but to see long rows of ogling creatures, whose modesty is as scant as their attire, labelled "Popular Actresses," is a little too much; and men who have the interest of the stage at heart ought to protest vigorously.'

I could only assent.

'Why do these sort of persons go on at all?' continued Sandering, who evidently felt the subject deeply. 'From vanity, generally, or some reason other than the making of a small salary, or a desire to learn the profession. Either they want the money, or they don't want it; in one case they have no business on the stage,

and in the other, the less business they have there the better. I speak, of course, of the "shopwindow actresses;" and it is for the sake of the gentlewomen who are really actresses that I am so indignant.'

'It's a rough sea and a difficult voyage, but how bravely some little girls weather the storm. For instance, the young lady—for she was a young lady, although she had been doomed to wear something like the costume of an acrobat—who played Mary in your comedy,' I said.

Sandering rose slowly from his chair, and leaned against the mantelpiece, smoking thoughtfully.

'Miss —— what was her name?' I continued. 'You seemed much struck by her once, and that is why she was taken from the ranks to play the part, I presume. Miss Burton—that's it. I suppose you have forgotten all about her, now?'

'No,' he slowly replied, with a somewhat troubled face; 'I have thought a good deal of her,—and a good deal less of myself in consequence.'

I looked at him inquiringly.

'I was struck with her, as you say, and told her so, and used to take her about to afternoon performances and that sort of thing; and gave her the part in the comedy, as you know.'

'Which was quite as much to your advantage as to hers, for she played it charmingly,' I interrupted.

'She did, certainly. Well, I used to take her about, and got to like her, awfully. After a time she seemed to grow shy about it—wouldn't come always when I wanted her to, and I was vexed and couldn't understand it. One evening, when she was out of an engagement, I wanted to take

her to the opera, and she made an excuse, and so I asked her about it. She said, "Of course I'd like to go with you every day, dear, only you know how particular I have to be, and if we are always together, people will talk and wonder where—" I think she was going to say, "Wonder where it will end," so it occurred to me to wonder where it would, and knowing where it ought—for she was evidently very fond of me—I told her that I wanted to marry her.'

He stopped, and gazed thoughtfully into the fire.

'And what did she reply?' I asked.

'I took her to the opera that evening. Things went on for a couple of months—she was a dear, good little girl,' he said, breaking off his sentence and pausing, as some reminiscences appeared to flit through his mind, 'and a lady, too. I don't mean to say she could get through a wood of social etiquette, as Gertrude Leigh might do, without knocking against some of the trees, but in heart she was as perfect a lady as the best of them. However,' he continued, 'things went on for a couple of months, and she was away from town when I heard, to my intense amazement, as you know, that this place had come to me. I wrote to her at once, but I had to go to Paris on business connected with the estate before returning to town. Well, the Leighs were there, and so was Ethilton, and—and he knew about the affair—with the little girl, and—'

'And I suppose he indulged in that mysterious style of conversation which is vaguely termed "saying things?"' I asked.

'Yes. He talked about my position in the county, and my small knowledge of a girl whose associa-

tions had been somewhat equivocal; and said what a good thing it would be if I went in for Bell Leigh—you know I used to like her, rather—and he persuaded me to stay on—he was always talking about it—and—'

'Lord Ethilton is such a very great swell that I can't be expected to see things from his elevated point of view; but I must say I fail utterly to understand why your position in the county should oblige you to act dishon—'

'Go on,' Sandering said, as I stopped short; 'oblige me to act dishonourably—'

'To act unkindly,' I continued, 'to Miss Burton.'

'And you think I ought to go and see her? Perhaps she has forgotten all about me,' he said.

'I'm sure that you ought to go; and she's not the sort of girl to have forgotten you—or to have ever forgotten herself, in spite of Ethilton's charitable opinion,' I answered.

'I will go,' he said, flinging his cigar into the fire. 'I will go; and, by Jove! I feel so happy now that I've made up my mind. Of course I ought to go; and I'll start to-morrow morning—at least, it seems so rude to you, old fellow, when you've just come down—'

'Not at all,' I said, and meant it; though, for the matter of that, it is the only reply to such a speech possible under any circumstances.

'I'll go up with you, if you like.'

'Don't you mind, really? I can't tell you how much obliged I shall be. Do you know where she is?'

'Yes; I was in at rehearsal at the Prince's a day or two ago. She is going to play in the new *opéra bouffe*.'

'A part?' he asked.

'Two lines, I think, and about five bars of recitative. There were thirteen people in the boxes and

nearly two rows of stalls the other night, and such good business nearly turned Manley's head, and he put a new piece into rehearsal at once.'

'There's a train at half-past ten, if that's not too early for you,' he said, very eager to be off, now that he had decided to go.

'Not at all; and as it's nearly twelve, I think I'll retire. Good night!—whatever are you thanking me for? Good night! and good luck in this and everything.'

A servant brought a very early message next morning that Sandering was up, and waiting for me to breakfast with him; and the dog-cart to take us to the station was at the door some twenty minutes earlier than was necessary. We arrived in town about two o'clock, and hastened to the theatre, where rehearsal was busily proceeding. Sandering's heart slightly failed here, and I left him in the neighbouring square while I went to find Nelly Burton, and tell her that he was waiting to see her. I made my way up the little dark staircase, and paused at the back of the half-lighted stage to take in the scene. The ladies of the establishment, gorgeously arrayed and highly bejewelled, were seated in a semicircle, receiving, with some shrugging of shoulders, the verdict of the leader of the band that there was very little improvement yet in the repetition of a chorus, and that it must go a good deal better before it would do. He was a vulgar person, and of bad manners, for he ventured to say that some of the sopranis were very flat and quite out of tune. Two of the men, who played characters of an Orestes and Pylades description, and who would have played Cain and Abel infinitely better, were bitterly quarrelling with each other, in the most polite tones, as

to what business should or should not be introduced into the scenes they had together. One of the principal ladies was going through a speech to which the author listened with a badly-concealed expression of contemptuous dismay; but he did not interfere, for he had written pieces before and knew the actress and her ability, and so sorrowfully resigned another of his best points and a good joke, fervently hoping that the next good part he wrote would be cast for a lady who had at any rate a little idea of reading, speaking, and understanding simple sentences in her native tongue. Barkington, the stage manager, who worked sixteen hours a day and did as much as sixteen people, was bustling busily to and fro. The manager, surrounded by some of his company, was examining a brilliant poster containing all the hues of the rainbow, in addition to several which no well-conducted rainbow ever dreamed of assuming, destined soon to blaze out and illuminate a thousand walls. But posters won't make pieces, charm the printers and lithographers never so wisely. The prospects of succeeding treasures grow more than precarious if a play has nothing but the hoardings to prop it up: the 'ghost' won't continue to 'walk' unless there is something stronger than that to superinduce his perambulation. I soon caught sight of Nelly Burton, whose fresh, honest little face formed a striking contrast to some of those around her—harsh, *blasé*, and coarse in expression as many of them were. Her trim little jacket had been worn before, and the *première jeunesse* had left the hat which was perched on the top of her fair curls; but she was very pleasant to look at.

'Are you busy?' I asked, when she had arched her interrogative eyebrows more than ever, and

given me a very nice little hand to shake, on ascertaining that it was I.

'I have to sing all this, directly,' she answered, smiling as she held out a sheet of music-paper with a very few bars scribbled on the top. 'Are they going over that scene again?'

'Not without cause, I think. Miss Shaftesbury does not seem to know much of her part, nor to play what she does know particularly well; and she certainly can't sing the music,' I said.

Kind little Nelly wanted to find an excuse for her directly.

'Well, you see, it's rather an awkward part to play,' she urged.

'Then the author's intention will be thoroughly realised, for she's certain to play it awkwardly. —I came here on purpose to find you, Miss Burton. A friend of mine, and of yours, wants very much indeed to see you,' I said, taking her a little apart. 'Can you guess who it is?'

Her lips said 'No,' but her face very plainly said 'Yes.'

'It is Clement Sandering,' I continued.

'I can't imagine what Mr. Sandering can wish to see me for,' she replied, with an effort at haughtiness which did not much accord with the eager way she glanced round to see if he were near, as she asked, 'Where is he?'

'In the square: waiting very anxiously indeed to see you,' I said.

'I am quite at a loss to understand what Mr. Sandering can have to say to me. Will you please ask him to write if there really is anything?' she answered.

'To a certain extent, Miss Burton, I am in Clement's confidence; and if I were not, your tone would lead me to think—several things.'

'I am sure my tone is just the same as always,' she said, looking

up with a faint twinkling as of coming tears in her ordinarily bright eyes. 'Mr. Sandering is nothing to me, and I had rather not see him.'

'Of course, if you had rather not there is no more to be said; but he will be greatly pained and hurt at your refusal—your unkind refusal, for he came all the way from Staverton this morning on purpose to see you. I did not think that you would have condemned any one without hearing the defence. Circumstantial evidence is so terribly deceptive,' I rejoined.

She did not in the least know what to do, and so tried to be angry, and rolled up her sheet of music without the slightest regard for the legibility of the writing.

'Well, good-bye, Miss Burton; I will say that you are too angry to forgive him, shall I?'

'There's nothing to forgive, and I'm not angry a bit,' she said, quite as savagely as it was possible for her to speak.

'What is the word?' I answered, repressing a slight inclination to smile. 'Annoyed—hurt—vexed—grieved—disappointed? There is evidently something wrong between you, for you and he were excellent friends when his play was produced. If you see him, in three seconds he will probably explain away—whatever requires explanation, and then you will be very sorry that you hesitated in hearing him. Indeed, I have very good reasons for believing that his explanations will be entirely satisfactory to you—which I had not; but then it strengthened my shot, and I knew that when they once met a good deal might be left to Sandering's native wit and persuasive powers, if the girl had ever been really fond of him.'

She unrolled her music, and studied the signature at the be-

ginning of the stave with great diligence.

'My cue will be coming directly,' she said, at length.

'And then you'll see poor Clement?' I asked.

'Indeed I don't know why you call him "poor Clement";' but she lingered over his name, and seemed to like the sound of it; 'he's not—Yes, I'll go, if you don't mind waiting a minute more,' and she went down the stage, did her scrap of duty, and then we left the theatre together.

Sandering was coming towards us as we turned into the square. He threw away his cigar, and raised his hat as I left Miss Burton and retired; he seeming uncertain whether or not to offer his hand, for her obstinate little paws were tightly holding her parasol. I looked after them, however, when they had gone a little way, and saw one hand slowly relax its grip and resign itself for a moment to Sandering's custody, anticipatory of its retention for a very much longer period; and when presently they overtook me, a glance convinced me that all was right. Nelly Burton appeared well on her way to making a good match.

The future Mrs. Sandering lived in rooms up a good many stairs in one of the streets which surround Russell Square; and thither I used sometimes to accompany my friend; when our pretty little hostess regaled us with cups of tea, and sang songs to us at a tinkling little piano which tried strenuously to be gay and festive and make good music, but whose age and decrepitude would sometimes assert themselves by the sudden cessation of a note or so, which grew tired and refused to speak any more—very unlike the mistress, who was never tired of talking a great deal in these happy

times. Here, too, we examined her drawings—she was a very clever little person, and sketched admirably—and looked over the precious volume in which were pasted the few newspaper cuttings criticising her performances: mostly from country chronicles, though there were nearly two lines from a London morning paper which had afforded her so vast an amount of pleasure, that if the writer had but known the gratification his pen was destined to give, I believe he would have defied his editor and put in half a column.

On one of these afternoons, about a week after our arrival in town, we were looking over a portfolio of sketches, and Sandering was amusing himself by chaffing the drawings to tease Nelly.

'The only suggestion I have to offer,' he said, putting a sketch on the mantelpiece and looking at it with the burlesqued air of a connoisseur, 'is that a body should put titles and explanatory notes to her drawings; because a body is so apt to be misunderstood.'

'I wish you wouldn't keep on teasing me about saying "a body," just because I used the expression once,' she said, spoiling a laugh with a pretended pout.

'You should be very careful what expression you make use of, for you want all you can muster to put into these works of art, dear. Now, here's a strange picture: very charming, very interesting, but just a trifle vague,' he said, selecting another from the case. 'A gentleman, seated in a — a box carried by two elliptic wheels, and drawn by a — by an anomalous quadruped, which my slender knowledge of natural history will not permit me safely to — A horse, is it? really a horse? Well, we'll call it a horse, at any rate, if only for the sake of, or rather the avoidance of, argu-

ment—drawn by a horse. The gentleman is engaged in emulating the example of Simple Simon in the ballad, and fishing as he goes along the turnpike road—*driving!* do you seriously mean it? Very well, dear, you drew it, and so you ought to know; but why a man should go out driving with a fishing rod in his hand, I—a *whip*? Oh, no; come now, Nelly, dear, that is going a little too far; really it is only as a personal favour to you that I can consent for a moment to accept that as a *whip*. Men don't hold their whips jutting over their horses' backs like bowsprits, and it quite bears out my premises that explanatory notes should be appended to these works of art.'

Nelly showed a disposition to attempt the recovery of her much-abused work; but Sandering was on the alert, and resumed:

'He is driving (if you really do insist upon it) up a hill towards a church of ingeniously-assorted architecture, about which I will only say that if the incumbent is not more upright as a man than the steeple is as a building, the heads and morals of the congregation are in some danger. You are sure that is a horse?'

'What a shame!' Nelly said, laughingly. 'I'm sure it's all quite plain enough.'

'Quite plain enough, in all conscience—you might almost go so far as to call it *ugly*,' Sandering replied.

'You may think so, if you like, sir. I'm sure the church is upright, and my uncle was incumbent—at least, curate there,' Nelly said, looking at the drawing.

'Why, I never knew that you had an uncle, dear. What's his name, and where does he live?' he asked.

'He lives abroad, and I don't write to him much—he wouldn't

like my being in the profession. He's very kind, though, and used to want me to go and live with him, only I didn't. Hedley, his name is.'

'What Hedley—not Robert, I suppose?' Sandering asked.

'Yes, it is Robert. How did you guess?' inquired Nelly.

'You don't mean to say that this is Chesterton Church?' Sandering said in a tone of extreme surprise.

'Yes, it is,' Nelly answered, evidently bewildered at his knowledge.

'But surely, Nelly, Robert Hedley, who was curate of Chesterton in 18—, was not your uncle?'

'Not only was, but is. Why are you so excited about it, dear?' she asked.

'Don't you know that—have you not heard of his death, Nelly?' he inquired.

'No, indeed I haven't,' Nelly replied.

'Poor little girl! I ought not to have mentioned it so suddenly. He died on the 17th November, 18—.'

Nelly laughed. 'Then all I can say is, that he has since been represented by a wonderfully healthy-looking ghost. I have not seen him lately, but two or three times since then; and I shall most likely have a letter from him—or the ghost—to-morrow morning. I wrote the other day, the first letter for a long time, to tell him about—about us,' she said.

'My dear child, if you are not joking, there must be a very great mistake somewhere. Do you know that if Robert Hedley were alive he would inherit Staverton Towers? But he *must* be dead. I have every

proof of it. You know,' he said, turning to me, 'it was chiefly to ascertain this that I went to Paris. He *must* be dead.'

Nelly persisted, however. He had lived in Paris, years ago, she said, but was now minister to a little Protestant community in the south of France; and such, on investigation, turned out to be the case. A Robert Hedley, a clergyman, corresponding apparently in other particulars, had died in Paris; but we had the best reasons for assuring ourselves that it was not he.

An extract from one of his letters to his niece will best finish my story:—

'—let Mr. Sandering, then, resume his occupation of the Towers without scruple; convinced that I should but be unhappy in leaving my work here, and adopting a new life, at my advanced age. You are my only relative, and if I have power to dispose of the property at my death, it will be yours: if not, it appears that your husband would inherit it.'

Sandering talked nonsense at first about having asked Nelly to marry him under false pretences, and it being his duty to free her from the engagement; but she appears much to prefer her bondage, and impudently asserts that if he did go away, he would only want to come back again as he had done before.

There is some question of entail which the lawyers have not yet decided, and indeed I believe they have not been requested to do so; but, under any circumstances, there seems every probability that it will turn out to be a good match.

ALFRED E. T. WATSON.

M. THIERS'S CONFIDENTIAL MAN.

BY M. LAING MEASON.

‘WHAT! you, who pretend to know everybody in Paris, have to ask me who that is! Do you really mean to say that you never met him before, and don’t know his name and occupation?’

The speaker was my excellent friend Struggles, Paris correspondent of the London ‘Daily Banner,’ as good a fellow as ever lived in private life, but, perhaps, a trifle too much given, in his professional capacity, to swallow the largest-sized wild *canards*, and to sympathise freely and largely in his writings with all sorts and kinds of rebellion, revolution, and loud Atheism, the very things, of all others, that he would have been one of the very first to condemn in Stoke Newington or Fleet Street. We had strolled leisurely up the Champs Elysées together, and had got as far as the Rond Point, when we met a hack Victoria coming out of the Rue Montaigne, and turn at a smart pace toward the Place de la Concorde. In the vehicle was sitting a tall, stout, half-Corsican, half-Jewish looking, man, dressed in black, and seemingly very anxious to get over the ground quicker than either the driver or his horse deemed practicable. But the moment the tall man perceived Struggles he stopped his Victoria, jumped out upon the side path, and commenced a hurried conversation—or seemed rather to be relating some very long story in a low and rapid tone; to which my friend appeared to listen with the most earnest and profound attention. Seeing that what the two had to say to each other was evidently not in-

tended for the ears of a third party, I walked on some dozen or twenty paces, wondering what Struggles could possibly have to do with so mouchard or police-spy looking an individual. I had not long to wait; the conference or confidence was soon at an end, and Struggles, with a face of the most intense satisfaction, came slowly towards me, making notes in his pocket-book as he walked; whilst his friend jumped into the Victoria, and started down the Champs Elysées at—for a Parisian hack cab—almost a respectable trot. When my friend reached me, I took the liberty of asking him who his friend was, at which he uttered the exclamation of surprise at the head of this paper.

‘What!’ he continued, ‘not know who that is! I thought everybody who knows anything of Paris, knew M. Mathurin.’

‘And pray,’ I replied, ‘may I ask who M. Mathurin may be?’

‘Come, come,’ said Struggles, ‘as if you did not know better than I do, that M. Mathurin is Thiers’s confidential man.’

‘Thiers’s confidential man?’ I exclaimed; ‘I know not a few persons connected more or less with M. Thiers’s very modest establishment at Versailles as well as in Paris, but I never heard or saw anything of the gentleman you spoke to just now; and don’t believe he is in any way connected with the household of the President. If M. Thiers has any ‘confidential man,’ depend upon it he is one of his secretaries, or one or other of his ministers; but I don’t believe he has any confidential adviser except himself.’

‘My dear fellow,’ replied Strug-

gles, 'depend upon it you are quite wrong. M. Mathurin is, and has been for several years, M. Thiers's confidential friend and adviser. He does not live in the same house as the President, but he sees him every day; and M. Thiers does nothing, either of public or private business, without consulting M. Mathurin. When we met him just now he had just left the Elysée, where he learned from the President himself news of the utmost importance which he has just told me, and which I shall telegraph at once to London. Would you mind walking a little quicker?' continued Struggles, 'I want to go to the telegraph office at the corner of the street up yonder, and send the news home, so that it may reach the office in time for a leader, a slashing leader, upon the news in to-morrow's "Banner." ' So saying, he quickened his pace almost to a run, until we arrived at the telegraph office on the left-hand side of the Champs Elysées, about half way between the Rond Point and the Arc de l'Etoile. Arrived there, he at once sat down to write his telegram; but, to judge from the number of slips he tore up, it was evidently some time before he managed to compose anything worthy of the great occasion. I, of course, kept at some little distance from him, not wanting him to think that I could, or wished to, see what he wrote. The telegram must have been a long one. The tariff from Paris to London is four francs for twenty words; and I could not help seeing that Struggles paid two bank notes of 100 francs each, and smaller notes to the amount of 75 francs, making 275 francs (11*l.* English money) for the very sensational—as I imagined it to be—news he had received from M. Thiers's confidential man. On

our way back to Voisin's in the Rue de Luxembourg, where we agreed to dine together, I said in a sort of half joking manner, ' Well, old fellow, you might tell me privately what you have heard, for if it was really of importance, I might turn an honest penny to-morrow at the Bourse.'

' Not for a thousand pounds,' replied Struggles. ' I don't believe,' he continued, ' that you would repeat willingly anything I told you in confidence, but you might meet some of those men of the embassy before the evening is over, and you might tell the news without thinking what you were saying. If so, those who heard you would at once rush to the Faubourg St. Honoré, inform Lord Lyons what they had heard, and it would be telegraphed at once to the Foreign Office; thus cutting the ground from under my feet; for, as you know, what an English newspaper of the present day wants is to have news twenty-four hours before its contemporaries. The news I have sent just now will astonish all Europe, and it will be a great feather in my cap getting the first telegram of it to London.'

' But,' said I, ' suppose your friend Mathurin communicates the same news to Clayworth, of the "Daily Record," or to Pink, of the "Morning Fashion," where will you be then? They can telegraph to London as well as you, and can have this great news in the columns of their papers as soon as you.'

' What!' roared Struggles, ' Mathurin give real, good, and trustworthy news to any one but me? Why, you don't know, my dear fellow, he is paid a regular salary by the "Banner," for keeping us well informed. The office in London sends him a cheque every month for a very re-

spectable sum, I assure you. He may leave our service if he likes, but he dare not furnish our enemy with the means of beating us.'

'Come, come!' I exclaimed, 'M. Thiers's confidential man in the receipt of pay from a newspaper! Excuse me, my dear Struggles, if it is as you say, that this gentleman is in the receipt of pay from any journal in the world, it is utterly impossible that he can be in a confidential position about the President.' But Struggles would not be convinced. We dined together at Voisin's, and long after dinner was over, he volunteered to tell me the news; which, the moment I heard it, I felt convinced had never come from the Elysée. Moreover, as I told Struggles, and demonstrated to him next day in the reading-room at Galignani's, the very intelligence he had been at the trouble and expense of telegraphing to London, at the expense of some 12*l.*, had been published the same forenoon in one or more of the Paris morning papers. Poor Struggles was put terribly out of conceit of his confidential man, but consoled himself with the idea that his news would be still news in London, and that his employers would be none the worse for the news—which, some days later, turned out to be a regular *canard* of the wildest and most impossible kind.

Very few days after my walk and dinner with Struggles, happening to pass the gateway of a well-known Paris banking establishment, I ran against two gentlemen who were coming out of the house, and who were so entirely engrossed by their conversation that they never saw me until they had almost knocked me down. One of them, a Mr. Custance, I knew very well. He is one of the very numerous class of English men of business who come to Paris for a

week, remain for three or four years, are always on the eve of going back to England, but never do so; and are as invariably expecting to make their respective fortunes the week after next, but seem as far from the desired goal at the end of each twelve months as they were at the commencement. A better specimen of an upright, honest, honourable London city man than Mr. Custance, would be difficult to find. He came over to France about the concession of a railway, some sixteen months ago, and here he is likely to remain—so far as getting his business carried through—for the next three years. In England his affair would have been settled in a month; in France it will, I should say, take five years to get what he wants. He passes his time—not unpleasantly, certainly, but still far from profitably—in going to the Minister of the Interior, whence he is referred to the Minister of Commerce; to be passed on to the Minister of Finance; sometimes even to the Minister of War, who pitches him back to the Minister of the Interior; where he begins the round again. As each of these personages has but one particular day in the week on which they can see outsiders; as they receive no human being on business of any kind except before eight, or after ten in the morning; as at each such reception there is invariably a crowd of persons waiting in the anteroom, and when the clock strikes ten no one is admitted to the Minister that day, but has to wait for the reception of the following week, it is hardly too much to say that my friend Custance, and others who, like him, are seeking to do business in Paris, have somewhat of a weary time of it. Occasionally one or other of the Ministers varies the game of ball by referring the appli-

cant to the British Ambassador; in which case he, at any rate, has the satisfaction of comparing the quickness of an English to the dawdling of a French public office. What it takes a week to get an answer to at the Minister of the Interior's, is accomplished in an hour by Lord Lyons or Mr. West. I had not seen Custance for some time; and as we shook hands very cordially, I took the liberty of asking him who his companion—who stood a little way apart, and looked more like a London butler who had been long out of place, than a proper companion for a trim, neat London man of business like Custance—was, and how on earth he had picked up such a very doubtful-looking acquaintance.

'What!' exclaimed Custance—almost in the very words that Struggles had used a week or so before—'don't you *know*? Why, I thought everybody who knew Paris well knew also Monsieur Setern!'

'And, pray, who may Monsieur Setern be?' I asked.

'Not know even Monsieur Setern's name?' replied Custance; 'why, everybody has heard of him; he is M. Thiers' confidential man.'

'Come, now,' I said, feeling not a little proud of my superior knowledge, 'you are entirely mistaken, my dear fellow. *That* is not M. Thiers's confidential man. I have seen—almost touched—the latter. His name is Mathurin. You know Struggles, the correspondent of the "Banner"?' He will tell you about Mathurin; he gets his most exclusive news from him. Mathurin sees Thiers every day: Thiers can do nothing without him.'

'My dear fellow,' interrupted Custance, 'you and Struggles are both completely out. I know that M. Thiers has but one confidential man, and that is Monsieur Setern,

who is standing there. Thiers does *nothing*—absolutely nothing, without consulting him. You know that confounded railway concession which has delayed me so long in Paris? I never could make any way with it until I was introduced to M. Setern, who will pull the business through for me in a month from this time.'

'And, pray, may I ask—excuse the question, it is a vulgar one, but my mind is rather vulgar in these matters,—may I ask whether your friend Setern is doing his work for nothing, or have you—pardon me the word—to square him, so that he may square others?'

'You don't suppose,' replied Custance, 'that a man can give up his valuable time for nothing? I do pay him a few napoleons every week, and he will get something comfortable if we carry this business through. But why do you ask?'

'Simply,' I replied, 'because I like to pick up knowledge as I go along. Those who know M. Thiers best, tell me that he keeps no one about him who has not plenty to do; and here I find, within the last week or so, two individuals, each claiming to be the confidential man of the President, and both, if not trading upon the title, certainly taking money from others for doing what I believe neither have the power to do.'

'Well, well,' said Custance, 'I can't stay to argue the matter with you. All I can say is, that our friend Struggles must have been taken in by some unprincipled fellow, and that my friend M. Setern is, and has been for years, the confidential friend and adviser of M. Thiers. Good-bye.' Saying which, he hurried off to join his ill-looking friend, and walked off arm-in-arm with him towards the Boulevards.

Although my acquaintance with Paris extends over fifteen years, I confess that the rival claims of the two French friends of my two friends—each putting himself forward as the confidential man and intimate friend of M. Thiers—astonished me not a little. In a large city like this, there must always be a number of more or less clever adventurers, who will try every possible and impossible means of making money. But if, in the score or so of my English acquaintances in this city, I had already come upon two who had each his own Thiers's confidential man how many more might there not be in the town? Nay, if it is so easy to get a living by boldly asserting that you are the confidential adviser of the President, would it not be a good speculation to set up in the same line myself? There was plenty of English business doing in Paris: might I not advertise in the 'Times,' the 'Telegraph,' 'Galignani,' or what not, as being able to carry through the most difficult affairs, obtain the most exclusive news, and warn people interested in the issue of coming political events? The business would be easy, the life pleasant, and when I had made enough money by the agency, I might sell it to a Joint Stock Company, retire on my two or three thousand a year, and enjoy for the rest of my life the fruits of my industry. After all, there was nothing more out of the way in setting up as the confidential man of the President of the French Republic, than in establishing a private inquiry office.

Meditating thus, and building as I walked along a few handsome business castles in the air, I was walking slowly along to breakfast at the particular restaurant where I take the liberty of eating that meal, when some one tapped

me on the shoulder from behind, and, turning round, I saw my very jolly-faced friend and fellow-countryman, Flocks, formerly of the London Stock Exchange, and Throgmorton Street; but now of the Paris Bourse and the Rue Vivienne. Flocks is none of your business-men who have always some uncommonly good thing in perspective. He does not believe in delays. His hours of business are those of the Bourse, from 12 to 3 p.m. He makes money generally, but sometimes, as he expresses it, 'runs on the wrong side of his post,' and loses all he has gained during the last month or so. He will speculate on anything and everything that appears in the shape of shares, so long as he sees his way to even a small profit. His great trouble is that he hardly knows a word of French; and the few sentences he can speak of the language might pass any day for Chinese or Arabic. When he overtook me his object was to get me to interpret between him and a Frenchman who was going to put him up to some impending 'move of the government, you know,' by which he hoped to make 'an uncommonly good thing of it' at the Bourse. 'Come,' said Flocks, 'and breakfast with me at Bignon's. You can keep a secret, I know. I want you to interpret between me and M. Delarue. He is going to put me up to a great move of the government. I expect to make at least a couple of hundred thousand francs by the business. And if I do, there will be a couple of hundred pounds at your service, which you can pay me at the Greek Kalenda. Come along, like a good fellow; I know you have nothing to do at this hour.' Saying which, he took my arm and hurried me along the Boulevards towards Bignon's, where he said his friend M. Delarue was to meet him.

'And, pray, who is M. Delarue?' I asked.

'You ought to remember,' Flocks, I continued, 'how often you have been let in by these pretenders to knowledge, and be careful how you risk your money upon information which is much more likely to prove false than true. You can't easily forget the "squeeze" you got in 1870, when you had private and confidential information that there would be no war, and went in heavily for *la hausse*, only twenty-four hours before war was declared?'

'Don't talk of it, like a good fellow,' groaned Flocks, 'I was a fool, I know, and got a most confounded "facer" in consequence. But I am all right this time. I was introduced to Delarue the other day. He must know what is going on at head-quarters, for he is M. Thiers's confidential man.'

'He is *what*?' I roared out, so loud that several of the passers-by stood still to look at me—he is what do you say?'

'I merely said that he is the confidential man of M. Thiers,' growled out Flocks, in something of an angry tone. 'Surely there is nothing in that to make you look so astonished, or to make you call out so loudly.'

'You would look astonished, and you would call out louder than I did, if you had seen—but never mind, come along to breakfast; I'll tell you all about what I mean some other time.'

We hurried on to Bignon's, and there, in a cabinet, or private room, which Flocks had ordered upstairs, found his friend, M. Delarue. This confidential man of M. Thiers was the most gentlemanly man of the brotherhood I had yet seen. He was not dark and stout like M. Mathurin, in whom Struggles put such confi-

dence for exclusive news; nor was he shabby and butler-out-of-place looking like M. Seterne, through whose influence and knowledge of the public officials Custance fully expected to get without delay his railway concession. M. Delarue was young, well dressed, and had the manners of a gentleman, although the moment he opened his mouth his speech showed him to be very imperfectly educated, with an accent which most unmistakably came from the south. After a breakfast which did honour to Flocks's knowledge of ordering the right dishes and wine, we had our coffee, and over that and our cigars began the business which had brought us together. The intelligence which M. Delarue furnished Flocks with was by no means either impossible or improbable; and in the end it proved partly true, so much so that my friend did make a little money by it, although not by a very large amount as much as he expected. The news was such as he might, and no doubt did, pick up amongst the employés of the Finance Minister, or even at some of the great Paris banking houses. It had not even the merit of being exclusive, for when Flocks went on the Bourse that day he heard several persons there talking of what he had just heard—and had paid M. Delarue a round sum for telling him—as an event extremely likely to come to pass. But my friend Flocks, like Struggles and Custance, believes firmly that he has got hold of the real confidential man of M. Thiers, and the others who profess to be such are mere impostors. Of the truth of the latter there can hardly be a doubt; only Flocks ought certainly to include his own man as well as the two others in the list of scoundrels.

The fact is, that ever since the

Commune was put down in 'the capital of civilization,' as Frenchmen delight to call Paris—there has sprung up a new trade or business—*une nouvelle industrie*, as our neighbours call it—in that city. No sooner does any foreigner—the English are kindly shown the preference—who has business in Paris arrive at any of the hotels, than by some means or other, known only to the craft of swindledom, he is spotted down by some highly intelligent native, who invariably gives himself out as being 'the confidential man of M. Thiers,' and offers to see the wanderer through all his troubles, obtain whatever he wants from the authorities, and put him in the right way of carrying out his scheme, obtaining his concession, or procuring him all the most exclusive news that can be picked up in the capital. The present writer is not without his own experiences in the latter line. A short time after the Government troops stamped out the mixture of republican ruffianism known by the name of the Commune, he was ordered from Versailles to Paris by his employers, the proprietors of a well-known London paper, for the purpose of continuing his correspondence in that city. One evening he was waited upon by a well-dressed, gentlemanly-mannered young man, speaking excellent English, who brought him a letter of introduction from a friend in London; and representing himself to be 'the confidential man of M. Thiers,' offered to procure him the earliest information that could possibly be obtained of everything that was going on in the government. The English correspondent received his visitor very civilly, and asked him how soon he thought he would be able to furnish some items of really exclusive, and *new*, news. The

Frenchman named the next day but two, and on the evening named called at the hotel with several items of what he called the latest news—intelligence hot from the mouth of M. Thiers himself. The Englishman read over the communication, and then pointed out the contents, item for item, printed in 'Galignani's Messenger,' of that morning. He then bowed his visitor out; and a few months later, the same 'confidential man' was brought up at the London Mansion House, and subsequently condemned to penal servitude, for successfully swindling the Lord Mayor out of 1200*l.* for the poor of Chateaudun.*

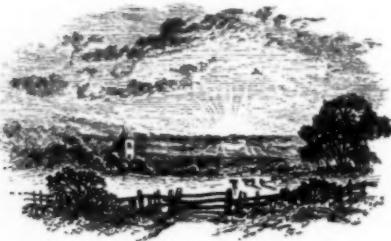
As a rule, 'the confidential men of M. Thiers,' don't ask their intended victims for money at first. They are too artistic—too delicately minded—for that. After a time they generally bind down the party for whom they pretend to act, by writing, to give them a certain amount of the profits he may obtain, or of the concession he may get. Last year, when the French government was buying up all the horses fit for cavalry work that could be found in Europe, a Yorkshire breeder found his way to Paris with a string of very likely-looking geldings and mares. Not knowing a word of the language, nor having the least idea how to go to work to sell his horses, he at once fell into the hands of a plausible scoundrel who called himself an ex-officer of cavalry, a near relation of the Minister of War's, and the intimate friend—'the confidential man'—of M. Thiers. He made a bargain—in writing, on stamped paper, if you please—with the Yorkshireman that he was to have

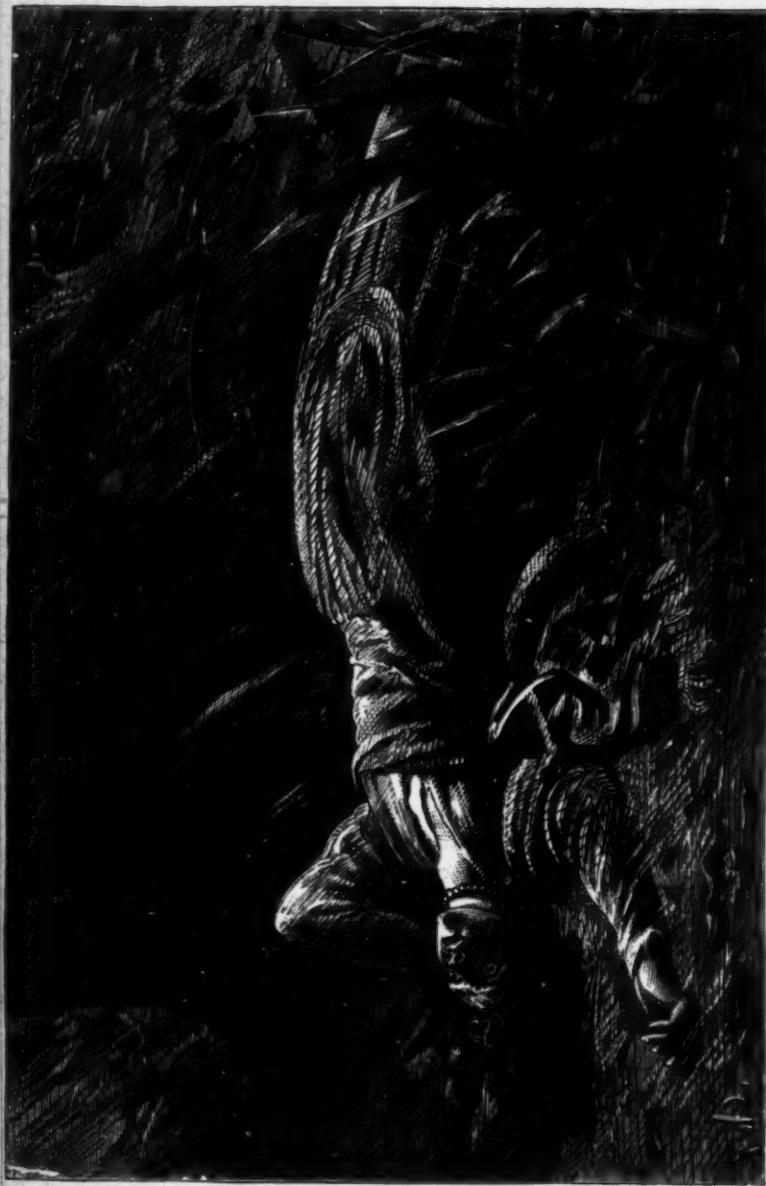
* A fact; the prisoner's name was Benson—he had several aliases—and he was tried, about January 1872, at the Central Criminal Court.

a commission of one hundred francs (4*l.*) upon every horse sold at the breeder's price within a fortnight. The 'confidential man' had little to do. The horses were taken out to Versailles, inspected by the officers of the Remount Department, and purchased at once. There were in all thirty nags, so that the 'confidential man'—who declared they had been bought so quickly because he spoke to M. Thiers on the subject—had a commission of three thousand francs (120*l.*) to receive. This the dealer paid at once, believing that the price he had put upon his horses had been realised. But when he went to get the money, and saw the sale notes that 'M. Thiers's confidential man' had signed, he found every animal

had been parted with for about five pounds less than he had priced it at. The 'confidential man' had sold them as cheap as he could in order to get his own commission; and so soon as he was paid the amount he vanished for a time from Paris.

One word by way of advice to Englishmen coming to Paris on business. Have nothing to do with any one who gives out that he is 'M. Thiers's confidential man.' But if, in spite of these anecdotes and my counsel, any person insists upon employing one of these gentlemen, be assured that the last places where they ever think of going, and the last place where they are to be heard of, is at M. Thiers's residence, whether in Paris or at Versailles.





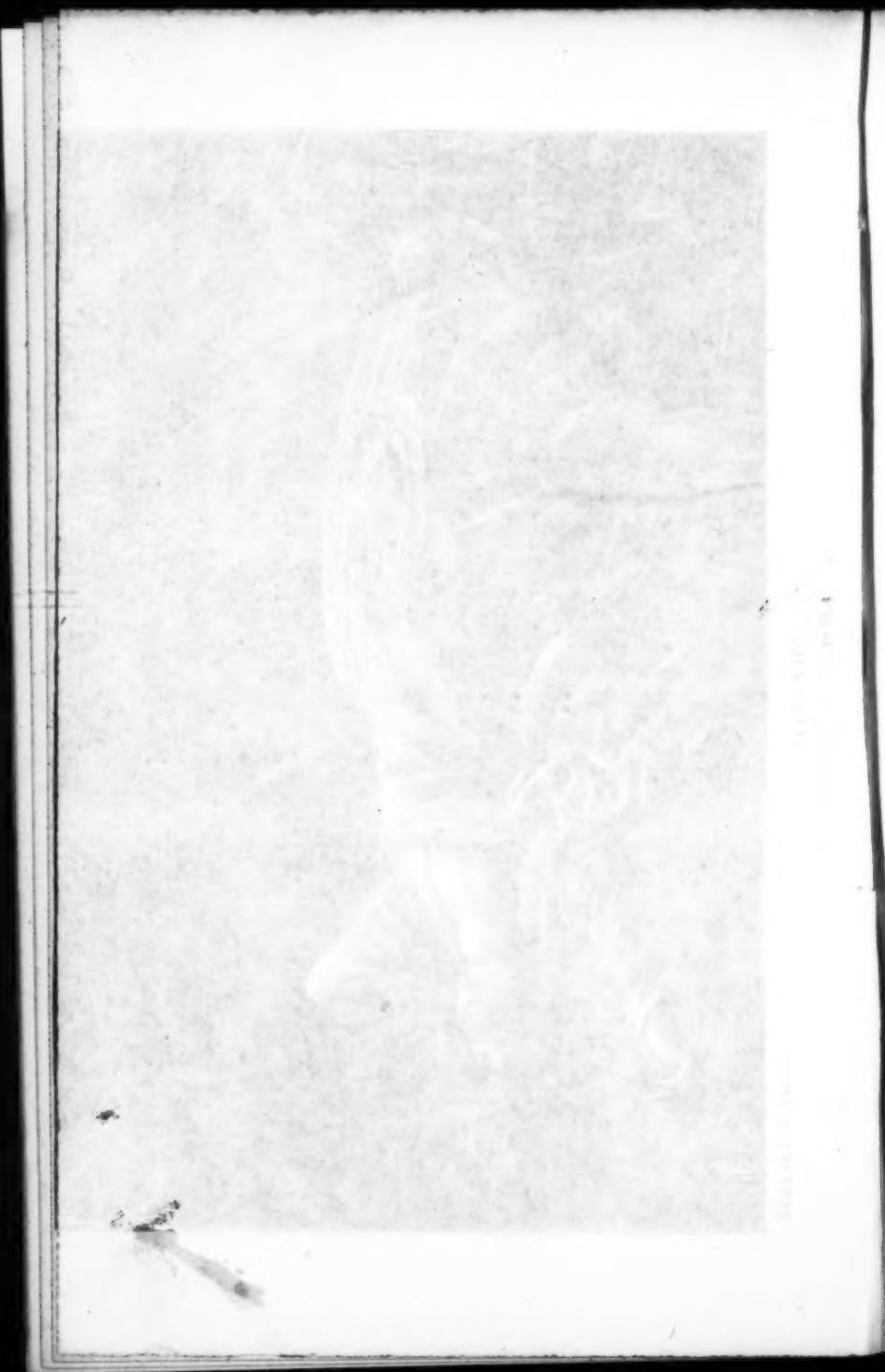
Drawn by F. W. Lawson.]

'MIRIAM.'

'Repentant Miriam, rest! once more at home.'

'MIKIAM.'

'Repentant Miriam, rest! once more at home.'



MIRIAM.

'WHAT! leave this happy home, this joyous life,
 Where are no sighs, nor ever gleams a tear—
 This dear old home? Oh, how could I be freer
 If I should change the daughter for the wife?
 Was ever husband kinder than a father—
 Was ever love so tender as a mother's—
 What manly heart beats warmer than a brother's?
 Marriage is freedom! Oh, no—bondage rather.

'I thank you for your offer. I am proud
 That you should thus desire me for your wife,
 Nay, I'll remember it through all my life
 That you have chosen me from out the crowd;
 But you are much mistaken—I'm a child,
 A very child—fickle, and fond of change:
 O me! it would indeed be very strange
 To pass from out my Paradise to the wild,

'The thorny, thistled wild that stretches round
 The pleasant Eden of my ancient home,
 Where angels watch, and happy dreamings come,
 And flowers and all bright, sweetest things are found:
 I cannot leave it. Oh, pass on your way;
 There's many a girl has brighter eyes than mine;
 Good-bye—to-morrow's sun will brightly shine—
 You'll have forgotten me ere close of day.'

So spake she; and I left the ancient hall
 Whose deepest gloom her laughter chased away;
 Silent and sad I left it. It was May,
 And blossom-crested Spring smiled over all,
 Clothing the gray woods with her robes of green,
 Hiding cold Winter's nakedness in the flood
 Of radiant sunbeams, as each modest bud
 Peeped forth, and sweetly blushed at being seen.

Ah! what to me the glory of these things?
 I could not wake from fascination's dream;
 I took man's constant sorrows for my theme;
 Sad thoughts I welcomed, and embraced the stings:
 The loathed what *is*—the longed-for what is *not*,
 These would compare each other day and night;
 Why fades not love, like friends, when out of sight;
 Why not, like gratitude, too soon forgot?

Forth from his pearly homes on hill and plain
 Tripped gaily o'er the land glad Summer-time,
 Dancing to music of the sheep-bells' chime
 And whistling peasant plodding by his wain:
 Deep curled with yellow hair, and garbed in sheen,
 His bright, clear eyes gleamed glory o'er the land,
 The calmed sea broke smiling on the strand,
 And the blue heavens showed not where storms had been

And I rose happier, and went on my way,
 Saying, ' This earth is very fair indeed ;
 Oh, wherefore should my heart for ever bleed ?
 I'll stanch the wound, for I must not betray
 The trust that the great God has given to me.
 No life is vain—all must work, and I, too,
 Have my appointed God-willed work to do—
 One short, sharp struggle, and my soul is free !'

The clear-voiced song of Summer fainter grew,
 Like mountain echoes sinking into sleep
 'Mid cheerless rocks where blighted shrublings weep
 Unsunned in lasting shadow. Autumn knew
 His briefer reign was ripe, and russet clad,
 All thoughtful browed, he loosed the golden band,
 And shook his browner tresses o'er the land,
 And summer loves gave place to life more sad.

And when white Winter mantled with his snows
 The shivering landscape, and the frosty sky
 Gleamed pitiless on starved humanity,
 And ragged poverty felt its worst of woes,
 Society's icy charity found its tongue,
 And, sighing with a well-bred sympathy,
 Marvelled how weak a woman's will might be ;
 And round *her* name its reeking rumours flung.

And wandering 'mid the ruins of old Rome,
 I met with one, a creature fit for show,
 A tailor's joy, a grain from Rotten Row,
 Who southward for a ball or so had come ;
 Whose thin lips sneered away a woman's fame ;
 A shallow, sallow, and bedizened elf
 Whose standard of comparison was self—
 He breathed with mocking Ha-ha ! Miriam's name !

Gad, sir, I saw them at the " Star and Garter,"
 At Lady Alton's *déjeuner* ; his large eyes,
 Ever expectant for the prettiest prize,
 Looked all their sweetest—ah ! she caught a Tartar !
 She didn't know my lord's nice reputation,
 But this papa and mammy too well knew,
 And wouldn't hear of him—so Birdie flew,
 And kindly gave Society a sensation.

Oh, darkest moments in a shadowed life,
 When faith becomes unfaith in human things !
 When doubt of all mankind on gloomy wings
 Swoops coldly down, and with remorseless knife
 Carves out the old and innocent belief
 In high-souled purity and stainless heart !
 It is enough, we cry ; let us depart,
 Bearing away the thin and barren sheaf,

The long sere sheaf of bitter memories
 Garnered with sobs upon an autumn night
 In the dim gloaming of a sad twilight—
 Fit hour for the tears of reveries ;
 When Life is shaded with the deepening clouds
 Heraldng the inexorable march of Death,
 And on our cheeks we feel the icy breath,
 And, shuddering, view the fatal garb of shrouds.

Yet never thoughts of such grim phantasy
 Made wrinkles on that young Marchesa's brow ;
 So thought I as I humbly made my bow
 One evening lounging at an embassy
 In gay Vienna. Languid eyelids fell
 In chill acknowledgment of courtesy,
 And made no further sign : then, turning, I
 Grew sick at heart, feeling the ancient spell.

The glamour of her eyes finds its old sway,
 And draws me to her. Oh, to know the truth
 That is to wake me from the dreams of youth !
 Voiceless she summons me, and I obey
 In a dim-lighted boudoir far apart,
 With head bowed low she sits : the busy hum
 Pierces not hither. Gazing, I stand dumb—
 Then ' Miriam !' leaps from out my burning heart.

Coldly she lifts to mine her great gray eyes ;
 Coldly, as falling ice in glacier caves,
 Or mocking laughter among new-filled graves,
 Words in harsh measure to her pale lips rise.
 No quivering there ; no trebbling accents tell
 Of sorrow-laden soul or wild regret ;
 The eyes are tearless, and the lips are set :
 O Love ! O Hope ! for evermore farewell !

* Why do you call me by that long-lost name ?
 Why do you murmur gently " Miriam,"
 As though you thought me other than I am,
 The woman who has forfeited her fame
 In the stern judgment of her childhood's home ?
 Why do I ask ? You too, like every man,
 But live your life on nice-adjusted plan,
 In long self-worship—let come what may come.

* You, knowing what you know, still come to me,
 And whisper " Miriam " in soft-tuned tones,
 The while your memory of the past disowns
 In " Miriam " and myself identity.
 What would you, sir ? My interest at court ?
 The word that even one so lost as I
 Can say to help you ? Aught my power can buy
 Is at your service. Speak, the time is short.'

And I, sore hurt, scarce knowing what I said,
 Made answer, quickly : ' Madame, had I thought
 That my one word such words could straight have brought
 In harsh response, I, silent as the dead,
 Would never more have changed a word with you :
 You do remind me that I have transgressed
 Society's strictest laws. A fault confessed
 Is half forgiven. Madame—thus—adieu !'

No sign of softness on that marble brow,
 No sorrow in those deep remorseless eyes,
 The cruel breast heaves no repentant sighs,
 Yet never seemed she beautiful as now.
 Superbly dressed, star-decked with many a gem
 Glittering the coronal that binds her hair,
 World known the title it is hers to share,
 But lost, lost, lost, her angel's diadem !

Three wild-voiced winters hushed themselves in spring ;

Three meek-eyed summers sank to sleep in snow :

There came a sound of nations all aglow
With heat of battle. Viewless agents bring,
Morn, noon, and night, the tidings of the strife :

In England we, not sharing in the fray,
Sit calmly criticising day by day,
Wondering what gun most fatal is to life.

At last, among the list of slain I read
A name, Italian, that I seem to know ;
One, also reading, sees it and laughs : ' So,
Madame the Marchioness at last is freed
From chains most noble. Will his Highness now
Marry her ? No. I fear it comes too late,
This chance of war. Fallen from her high estate,
I fear she'll not regain it anyhow.'

Back—back to childhood's scenes I sped that day ;
I would reopen every healed wound,
And 'mid the woods and smiling uplands found
The paths where we of old were wont to stray,
The daisied mead, the sweet and silent glade,
The merry brook and mimic waterfall,
The broad-girthed beech and storm-sered oak tree, all
Unchanged. Life's gloom is darker than their shade.

Pass by, Remembrance, weird and sombre-veiled,
Why should I hug thee to my patient heart ?
Torture me not. I long—I long for rest,
For, oh, my eye has dimmed, my cheek has paled ;
Love, cursed and withered, sure has poisoned me,
And all fair things look ghastly to my gaze ;
Ah, very false are all this cold world's ways ;
Oh, heart, it were far better not to be !

I flung me on a waste of blasted elm
A giant wind had wrestled with and thrown,
And gathering sorrow up in one long moan,
Let loose a flood of anguish to o'erwhelm
The buoyancy of hope in deepest waves.
Go by, false hearts ! Love, Trust, and Honour, go !
The loathsomeness your masks hide now I know—
Your triumphs, corruption ; and your trophies, graves !

Oh, hush ! methought I heard a bitter cry,
Plucked from a breaking heart, go up to heaven.
In long despairing wail, as one fiend-driven
By maddening thoughts, shrieks out in agony,
Then falls in silence, voiceless evermore.
Where is this fellow sufferer ? let me see
If other's anguish like to mine can be !
Who learns with me the depths of misery's lore ?

Oh, God ! I see her close beside me lying !
The matchless form low grovels in the dust !
Come, cursèd Passion—damnèd Human Lust,
And watch thy fairest victim slowly dying !
Here, where her infant feet have often strayed—
Here, where she sang in girlhood's laughing glee,
So pure—so bright—so innocent and free—
Come back to perish where her childhood played !

No more—oh ! never more on earth again
Shall sorrow shadow that pale face of thine !
No more shall happy lights of laughter shine
Across thy lips. Thine now nor praise nor pain
Can move to smiles or sighs—the end is come,
And God alone shall judge thee, and not I !
Low on the sod that nursed thee thou dost lie—
Repentant Miriam, rest ! once more at home.

CHARLES LAWRENCE YOUNG.



‘NO INTENTIONS.’

BY FLORENCE MARRYAT, AUTHOR OF ‘LOVE’S CONFLICT,’ ‘VÉRONIQUE,’ ETC.

CHAPTER VII.

MEANWHILE Irene, unconscious how her work of charity will influence her future, is sitting with a trembling heart by the bedside of the laundress’s niece. She is unused to sickness or to death, but she knows now that the one can only vanish hence before the presence of the other; for the parish doctor met her, on her entrance to the cottage, and answered her questions about Myra with the utmost frankness.

‘She *may* linger,’ he said doubtfully, ‘but it is more likely that she will not. She has been breaking up for some time past, and has not sufficient strength to rally from this last attack. I shall be here again in the morning; but as I can do her no good, it would be useless my staying now.’ And the doctor mounted his stout cob and trotted off in another direction.

Irene stood watching him till he was out of sight, and then turned into the cottage with a sigh. When the doctor leaves the house in which a patient lies *in extremis*, it seems as if death had already entered there.

There is no cessation of business in Mrs. Cray’s dwelling, though her niece does lay dying. People who work hard for their daily bread cannot afford time for sentiment; and the back kitchen is full of steam and soapsuds, and the washerwomen are clanking backwards and forwards over the wet stones in their pattens, to wring and hang out the linen; and the clatter of tongues and rattling of tubs and noise of the children are so continuous that Irene has

difficulty at first in making herself heard. But the child who took the message up to the Court has been on the look-out for her, and soon brings Mrs. Cray into the front kitchen, full of apologies for having kept her waiting.

‘I’m sure it’s vastly good of you, mum, to come down a second time to-day; and I hope you don’t think I make too free in sending up the gal’s message to you; but she has been that restless and uneasy since you left her this morning, that I haven’t been able to do nothing with her, and the first words she say, as I could understand, was, “Send for the lady!”’

‘Poor thing!’ is Irene’s answer. ‘I am afraid the doctor thinks very badly of her, Mrs. Cray.’

‘Badly of her! Lor’, my dear lady, she’s marked for death before the week’s over, as sure as you stand there. Why she’s bin a fighting for her breath all day, and got the rattle in her throat as plain as ever I hear it.’

‘Oh, hush! your voice will reach her,’ remonstrates Irene; for the laundress is speaking, if anything, rather louder than usual.

‘It can’t make much difference if it do, mum, and it’ll come upon her all the harder for not knowing it beforehand. It’s my Joal I think of most, for his heart’s just wrop up in his cousin; and what he’ll do when she’s took, I can’t think. And I haven’t had the courage to tell him it’s so near, neither. But you’ll be wanting to go up to Myra. She’s ready for you, I’ll be bound.’ And Mrs. Cray stands on one side to let Irene mount the

ricketty narrow staircase that leads to the second story, and up which her feet have passed many times during the last few weeks. She traverses it now, silently and solemnly, as though a silent unseen Presence trod every step with her: it is so strange to the young to think the young lie dying!

Myra is laid on a small bed close by the open lattice and in the full light of the setting sun. Her face has lost the deathlike ghastliness it wore in the morning: it is flushed now, and her eyes are bright and staring; to Irene's inexperience she looks better; but there is a fearful anxiety pictured on her countenance that was not there before.

'Is it true?' she says in a hoarse whisper, as her visitor appears.

'What, Myra?' Irene answers, to gain time; but she knows what the girl must mean, for the door of her bedroom at the top of the little staircase stood wide open.

'What aunt said just now, that I am marked for death within the week. A week! oh, it's a short time—it's a horribly short time!' And she begins to cry, weakly, but with short gasps for breath that are very distressing to behold. Irene forgets the difference of station between them: she forgets everything excepting that here is a weak, suffering spirit trembling before the Great Inevitable! And she does just what she would have done had Myra been a sister of her own—she throws her hat and mantle on a chair, and goes up to the bedside, and kneels down and takes the poor dying creature in her arms and presses her lips upon her forehead.

'Dear Myra, don't cry—don't be frightened. Remember Who is waiting on the other side to welcome you!'

The sweet sympathetic tones, the pressure—above all the kiss,

rouse Myra from the contemplation of herself.

'Did—did—you do that?'

'Do what, dear?—kiss you?'

'Yes. Did I fancy it—or were your lips here?' touching her forehead.

'My lips were there—why not? I kissed you, that you might know how truly I sympathise with your present trouble.'

'You mustn't do it again. Ah! you don't guess. You would not do it if you knew—My God! my God! and I am going!' and here Myra relapses into her former grief.

For a moment Irene is silent. She is as pure a woman as this world has ever seen; but she is not ignorant that impurity exists, and, like all honourable and high-minded creatures, is disposed to deal leniently with the fallen. She has suspected more than once during her intercourse with Myra, that the girl carries some unhappy secret about with her, and can well imagine how, in the prospect of death, the burden may become too heavy to be borne alone. So she considers for a little before she answers, and then she takes the white, wasted hand in hers.

'Myra! I am sure you are not happy; I am sure you have had some great trouble in your life which you have shared with no one; and now that you are so ill, the weight of it oppresses you. I don't want to force your confidence, but if it would comfort you to speak to a friend, remember that I am one. I will hear your secret (if you have a secret), and I will keep it (if you wish me to keep it) until my own life's end. Only, do now what will make you happier and more comfortable.'

'Oh! I can't—I can't—I daren't.'

'I daresay it will be hard to tell; but Myra, poor girl! you are

soon going where no secrets can be hid, and I may be able to comfort you a little before you go.'

'If you knew all, you wouldn't speak to me, nor look at me again.'

'Try me.'

'I daren't risk it. You're the only comfort that has come to me in this place, and yet—and yet,' she says, panting, as she raises herself on one elbow and stares hungrily into Irene's compassionate face—'how I wish I dared to tell you everything!'

At this juncture, the sound of 'thwacking' is audible from below, and immediately followed by the raising of Tommy's infantine voice in discordant cries.

'She's at it again!' exclaims Myra suddenly and fiercely, as the din breaks on their conversation; and then, as though conscious of her impotency to interfere, she falls back on her pillows with a little feeble wail of despair. Irene flies downstairs to the rescue—more for the sake of the sick girl than the child—and finds Tommy howling loudly in a corner of the kitchen, whilst Mrs. Cray is just replacing a thick stick, which she keeps for the education of her family, on the chimney-piece.

'Has Tommy been naughty?' demands Irene, deferentially—for it is not always safe to interfere with Mrs. Cray's discipline.

'Lor! yes, mum, he always be. The most troublesome child as ever was—up everywheres and over everythink, directly my back's turned. And here he's bin upsetting the dripping all over the place, and taking my clean apron to wipe up his muck. I'm sure hundreds would never pay me for the mischief that boy does in as many days. And he not three till Jan-nivery!'

'Let me have him. I'll keep him quiet for you, upstairs,' says Irene; and carries off the whimper-

ing Tommy before the laundress has time to remonstrate.

'He's not much the worse, Myra,' she says cheerfully, as she resumes her seat by the bedside with the child upon her knee. 'I daresay he does try your aunt's temper; but give him one of your grapes, and he'll forget all about it.'

But, instead of doing as Irene proposes, Myra starts up suddenly, and, seizing the boy in her arms, strains him closely to her heart, and rocks backwards and forwards, crying over him.

'Oh, my darling! my darling—my poor darling! how I wish I could take you with me!'

Tommy, frightened at Myra's distress, joins his tears with hers; while Irene sits by, silently astonished. But a light has broken in upon her—she understands it all now.

'Myra!' she says, after a while, 'so, this is the secret that you would not tell me? My poor girl, there is no need for you to speak.'

'I couldn't help it!' bursts forth from Myra. 'No—not if you never looked at me again. I've borne it in silence for years, but it's been like a knife working in my heart the while. And he's got no one but me in the wide world—and now I must leave him—I must leave him. Oh! my heart will break!'

The child has struggled out of his mother's embrace again by this time (children, as a rule, do not take kindly to the exhibition of any violent emotion), and stands, with his curly head lowered, as though he were the offending party, while his dirty little knuckles are crammed into his wet eyes.

Irene takes a bunch of grapes from her own offering of the morning, and holds them towards him.

'Tommy, go and eat these in the corner,' she says, with a smile.

The tear-stained face is raised to hers—the blue eyes sparkle, the

chubby fingers are outstretched. Tommy is himself again, and Irene's attention is once more directed to his mother.

'Dear Myra!' she says, consolingly.

'Don't touch me!' cries the other, shrinking from her. 'Don't speak to me—I ain't fit you should do either! But I couldn't have deceived you if it hadn't been for aunt. You're so good, I didn't like that you should show me kindness under false pretences; but when I spoke of telling you, and letting you go your own way, aunt was so violent—she said, the child should suffer for every word I said. And so, for his sake, I've let it go on till now. But 'twill be soon over.'

Irene is silent, and Myra takes her silence for displeasure.

'Don't think harshly of me!' she continues in a low tone of deprecation. 'I know I'm unworthy; but if you could tell what your kindness has been to me—like cold water to a thirsty soul—you wouldn't blame me so much, perhaps, for the dread of losing it. And aunt frightened me. She's beat that poor child'—with a gasping sob—'till he's been black and blue; and I knew, when I was gone he'd have no one but her to look to, and she'll beat him then—I know she will—when his poor mother's cold, and can't befriend him. But if she does!' cries Myra, with fierce energy, as she clutches Irene by the arm and looks straight through her—if she does, I'll come back, as there's a God in heaven, and bring it home to her!'

'She never can illtreat him when you are gone, Myra!'

'She will—she will! She has a hard heart, aunt has, and a hard hand, and she hates the child—she always has. And he'll be thrown on her for bed and board, and, if she can, she'll *kill him!*'

The thought is too terrible for

contemplation. Myra is roused from the partial stupor that succeeds her violence by the feel of Irene's soft lips again upon her forehead.

'You did it again!' she exclaims, with simple wonder. 'You know all—and yet, you did it again. Oh! God bless you!—God bless you!' and falls herself to kissing and weeping over Irene's hand.

'If you mean that I know this child belongs to you, Myra, you are right: I suspected it long ago; but further than this I know nothing. My poor girl, if you can bring yourself to confide in me, perhaps I may be able to befriend this little one when you are gone.'

'Would you—really?'

'To the utmost of my power.'

'Then I will tell you everything—everything! But let me drink first.'

Irene holds a glass of water to her lips, which she drains feverishly. A clumping foot comes up the staircase, and Jenny's dishevelled head is thrust sheepishly into the doorway.

'Mother says it's hard upon seven, and Tommy must go to bed.'

'Nearly seven!' cries Irene, consulting her watch. 'So it is; and we dine at seven. I had no idea it was so late!'

'Oh! don't leave me!' whispers Myra, turning imploring eyes upon her face.

Irene stands irresolute; she fears that Colonel Mordaunt will be vexed at her absence from the dinner-table, but she cannot permit anything to come between her and a dying fellow-creature's peace of mind. So in another moment she has scribbled a few lines on a leaf torn from her pocket-book, and despatched them to the Court. Tommy is removed by main force to his own apartment, and Myra and she are comparatively alone.

'No one can hear us now,' says Irene, as she closes the door and supports the dying woman on her breast.

'It's three years ago last Christmas,' commences Myra feebly, 'that I took a situation at Oxford. Uncle was alive then, and he thought a deal of me, and took ever so much trouble to get me the situation. I was at an hotel—I wasn't barmaid: I used to keep the books and an account of all the wine that was given out; but I was often in and out of the bar; and I saw a good many young gentlemen that way—mostly from the colleges, or their friends.'

Here she pauses, and faintly flushes.

'Don't be afraid to tell me,' comes the gentle voice above her; 'I have not been tempted in the same way, Myra; if I had, perhaps I should have fallen too!'

'It wasn't quite so bad as that,' interposes the sick girl eagerly, 'at least I didn't think so. It's no use my telling you what he was like, nor how we came to know each other; but after a while he began to speak to me and hang about me, and then I knew that he was all the world to me—that I didn't care for anything in it nor out of it, except he was there. *You* know, don't you, what I mean?'

'Yes; I know!'

'He was handsome and clever and had plenty of money; but it would have been all the same to me if he had been poor, and mean, and ugly. I loved him! Oh, God, how I loved him! If it hadn't been for that, worlds wouldn't have made me do as I did do. For I thought more of him all through than I did of being made a lady.'

'But he could not have made you that, even in name, without marrying you, Myra.'

'But he *did*—at least—oh! it's a bitter story, from beginning to end; why did I ever try to repeat it?'

'It is very bitter, but it is very common, Myra. I am feeling for you with every word you utter.'

'He persuaded me to leave the hotel with him. I thought at the time that he meant to act fairly by me, but I've come to believe that he deceived me from the very first. Yet he *did* love me; oh, I am sure he loved me almost as much as I loved him, until he wearied of me, and told me so.'

'You found it out, you mean. He could not be so cruel as to tell you.'

'Oh, yes, he did. Do you think I would have left him else? He told me that he should go abroad and leave me; that he was bitterly ashamed of himself; that it would be better if we were both dead, and that if he could, he would wipe out the remembrance of me with his blood. All that, and a great deal more; and I have never forgotten it, and I never shall forget it. I believe his words will haunt me wherever I may go—even into the other world!'

She has become so excited, and her excitement is followed by so much exhaustion, that Irene is alarmed, and begs her to delay telling the remainder of her story until she shall be more composed.

'No! no! I must finish it now; I shall never be quiet until I have told you all. When he said that, my blood got up, and I left him. My cousin Joel had been hanging about the place after me, and I left straight off and came back home with him.'

'Without saying a word to—to—the person you have been speaking of?'

'He wanted to get rid of me;

why should I say a word to him? But I grieved afterwards—I grieved terribly; and when the child was born, I would have given the world to find him again.'

'Did you ever try?'

'Try! I've travelled miles and miles, and walked myself off my feet to find him. I've been to Oxford and Fretterley (that was the village we lived at), and all over London, and I can hear nothing. I've taken situations in both those towns, and used his name right and left, and got no news of him. There are plenty that bear the same name, I don't doubt, but I've never come upon any trace of him under it; and I've good reason to believe that it was not his right one.'

'What is the name you knew him by, then, Myra?'

'Hamilton.'

'Hamilton!' repeats Irene. 'That is not a common name!'

'But it's not his. I've found that out since, for I know he belonged to the college, and there wasn't a gentleman with that name there all through the term. His love was false, and his name was false, and everything that took place between us was false. He deceived me from first to last, and I'm dying before I can bring him to book for it!'

'You shouldn't think of that now, Myra. You should try to forgive him, as you hope that your own sins will be forgiven.'

'I could have forgiven him if it hadn't been for Tommy. But to think of that poor child left worse than alone in this wretched world—his mother dead and his father not owning him—is enough to turn me bitter, if I hadn't been so before. Aunt will illuse him; she's barely decent to him now, when I pay for his keep, and what she'll do when he's thrown upon her for everything, I daren't think

—and I shall never lie quiet in my grave!'

'Myra, don't let that thought distress you. I will look after Tommy when you are gone.'

'I know you're very good. You'll be down here every now and then with a plaything or a copper for him—but that won't prevent her beating him between whiles. He's a high-spirited child, but she's nearly taken his spirit out of him already, and he's dreadfully frightened of her, poor lamb! He'll cry himself to sleep every night when I'm in the churchyard! and the tears steal meekly from beneath Myra's half-closed eyelids, and roll slowly down her hollow cheeks.'

'He shall not, Myra,' says Irene, energetically. 'Give the child into my charge, and I'll take him away from the cottage and see that he is properly provided for.'

'You will take him up to the Court and keep him like your own child? He is the son of a gentleman!' says poor Myra, with a faint spark of pride. Irene hesitates. Has she been promising more than she will be able to perform? Yet she knows Colonel Mordaunt's easy nature, and can almost answer for his compliance with any of her wishes.

'Oh, if you could!' exclaims the dying mother, with clasped hands. 'If I thought that my poor darling would live with you, I could die this moment and be thankful!'

'He shall live with me, or under my care,' cries Irene. 'I promise you.'

'Will you swear it? Oh! forgive me! I am dying.'

'I swear it.'

'Oh! thank God, who put it in your heart to say so! Thank God! Thank God!'

She lies back on her pillows, exhausted by her own emotion,

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'Oh, yes, he did. Do you think I would have left him else? He told me that he should go abroad and leave me; that he was bitterly ashamed of himself; that it would be better if we were both dead, and that if he could, he would wipe out the remembrance of me with his blood. All that, and a great deal more; and I have never forgotten it, and I never shall forget it. I believe his words will haunt me wherever I may go—even into the other world!'

She has become so excited, and her excitement is followed by so much exhaustion, that Irene is alarmed, and begs her to delay telling the remainder of her story until she shall be more composed.

'No! no! I must finish it now; I shall never be quiet until I have told you all. When he said that, my blood got up, and I left him. My cousin Joel had been hanging about the place after me, and I left straight off and came back home with him.'

'Without saying a word to—to—the person you have been speaking of?'

'He wanted to get rid of me;

why should I say a word to him? But I grieved afterwards—I grieved terribly; and when the child was born, I would have given the world to find him again.'

'Did you ever try?'

'Try! I've travelled miles and miles, and walked myself off my feet to find him. I've been to Oxford and Fretterley (that was the village we lived at), and all over London, and I can hear nothing. I've taken situations in both those towns, and used his name right and left, and got no news of him. There are plenty that bear the same name, I don't doubt, but I've never come upon any trace of him under it; and I've good reason to believe that it was not his right one.'

'What is the name you knew him by, then, Myra?'

'Hamilton.'

'Hamilton!' repeats Irene. 'That is not a common name!'

'But it's not his. I've found that out since, for I know he belonged to the college, and there wasn't a gentleman with that name there all through the term. His love was false, and his name was false, and everything that took place between us was false. He deceived me from first to last, and I'm dying before I can bring him to book for it!'

'You shouldn't think of that now, Myra. You should try to forgive him, as you hope that your own sins will be forgiven.'

'I could have forgiven him if it hadn't been for Tommy. But to think of that poor child left worse than alone in this wretched world—his mother dead and his father not owning him—is enough to turn me bitter, if I hadn't been so before. Aunt will illuse him; she's barely decent to him now, when I pay for his keep, and what she'll do when he's thrown upon her for everything, I daren't think

—and I shall never lie quiet in my grave!'

'Myra, don't let that thought distress you. I will look after Tommy when you are gone.'

'I know you're very good. You'll be down here every now and then with a plaything or a copper for him—but that won't prevent her beating him between whiles. He's a high-spirited child, but she's nearly taken his spirit out of him already, and he's dreadfully frightened of her, poor lamb! He'll cry himself to sleep every night when I'm in the churchyard' and the tears steal meekly from beneath Myra's half-closed eyelids, and roll slowly down her hollow cheeks.

'He shall *not*, Myra,' says Irene, energetically. 'Give the child into my charge, and I'll take him away from the cottage and see that he is properly provided for.'

'You will take him up to the Court and keep him like your own child? He is the son of a gentleman!' says poor Myra, with a faint spark of pride. Irene hesitates. Has she been promising more than she will be able to perform? Yet she knows Colonel Mordaunt's easy nature, and can almost answer for his compliance with any of her wishes.

'Oh, if you could!' exclaims the dying mother, with clasped hands. 'If I thought that my poor darling would live with you, I could die this moment and be thankful!'

'He *shall* live with me, or under my care,' cries Irene. 'I promise you.'

'Will you swear it? Oh! forgive me! I am dying.'

'I swear it.'

'Oh! thank God, who put it in your heart to say so! Thank God! Thank God!'

She lies back on her pillows, exhausted by her own emotion,

whilst her hands are feebly clasped above those of her benefactress, and her pale lips keep murmuring at intervals, 'Thank God.'

'If you please, mum, the Colonel's sent the pony chaise to fetch you home, and he hopes as you'll go immediate.'

'The carriage!' says Irene, starting, 'then I *must* go.'

'Oh! I had something more to tell you,' exclaims Myra; 'I was only waiting for the strength. You ought to know all; I—I—'

'I cannot wait to hear it now, dear Myra. I am afraid my husband will be angry; but I will come again to-morrow morning.'

'To-morrow morning I may not be here!'

'No! no! don't think it. We shall meet again. Meanwhile, be comforted. Remember, *I have promised*,' and with a farewell pressure to the sick girl's hand, Irene resumes her walking things, and drives back to the Court as quickly as her ponies will carry her. Her husband is waiting to receive her on the doorstep.

* * * *

Colonel Mordaunt is not in the best of tempers, at least *for him*. The little episode which took place between Irene and himself relative to her predilection for Mrs. Cray's nurse-child, has made him rather sensitive on the subject of everything connected with the laundress's cottage, and he is vexed to-night that she should have neglected her guests and her dinner-table, to attend the death-bed of what, in his vexation, he calls a 'consumptive pauper.'

And so, when he puts out his hand to help his wife down from her pony chaise, he is most decidedly in that condition domestically known as 'grumpy.'

'Take them round to the stable at once,' he says sharply, looking at the ponies and addressing the

groom; 'why, they've scarcely a hair unturned; they must have been driven home at a most unusual rate.'

'You sent word you wanted me at once, so I thought it was for something particular,' interposes Irene, standing beside him in the porch.

'Do you hear what I say to you?' he repeats to the servant, and not noticing her. 'What are you standing dawdling there for?'

The groom touches his hat, and drives away.

'What is the matter, Philip?'

'There's nothing the matter, that I know of.'

'Why did you send the pony chaise for me, then? Why didn't you come and fetch me yourself? I would much rather have walked home through the fields with you.'

'We cannot both neglect our guests, Irene. If you desert them, it becomes my duty to try and supply your place.'

'Why! Aunt Cavendish is not affronted, is she?' She must know that it's only once in a way. Did you get my note, Philip?'

'I received a dirty piece of paper with a notice that you would not be back to dinner.'

'I thought it would be sufficient,' says Irene, sighing softly; 'and I really couldn't leave poor Myra, Philip. She is dying as fast as it is possible, and she had something very particular to tell me. You are not angry with me?'

'Angry! oh, dear no! why should I be angry? Only, I think it would be advisable, another time, if these paupers' confidences were got over in the morning. And I certainly do not approve of your being at the beck and call of every sick person in the village, whether you are fit to attend to them or no! You had a bad headache yourself when I left you this afternoon.'

'Oh, my poor head! I had forgotten all about it. Yes; it was very painful at one time, but I suppose my excitement has driven the pain away. Philip, I have been listening to such a sad story. You know the child—the little boy that they said was at nurse with Mrs. Cray.'

'I have heard you mention it. I really did not know if 'twas a boy or a girl, or if you knew yourself,' he replies indifferently.

'No, no; of course not!' she says, colouring, 'but you know what I mean. Well, what do you think—it's secret though, mind'—lowering her voice—'he belongs to poor Myra, after all; isn't it shocking?'

'And what is the use of their telling you such tales as that?' replies Colonel Mordaunt, angrily; 'I won't have them defiling your ears with things that are not fit for you to hear. If it is the case, why can't they keep the disgrace to themselves? You can do no good by knowing the truth.'

'Oh, Philip! but you don't understand; it was the poor girl told me, and it was such a comfort to her—she has no one else to confide in. And besides, she is so unhappy, because Mrs. Cray beats her poor little boy, and she is afraid he will be ill-treated when she is gone.'

'And wants to extract a promise from you to go down there every morning and see that her precious offspring has slept and eaten well since the day before. No, thank you, Irene! I think we've had quite enough of this sort of thing for the present, and when the laundress's niece is dead, I hope that you will confine your charity more to home, and not carry it on *ad infinitum* to the third and fourth generation.'

He makes one step downwards as though to leave her then, but

she plucks him timidly by the sleeve and detains him.

'But, Philip—I promised her! Promised what?'

'That I would befriend her child when she is gone; that I would take him away from Mrs. Cray (she was so miserable about him, poor girl, she said she couldn't die in peace), and—and (I do so hope you won't be vexed) —and bring him up under my own care.'

'What!' cries Colonel Mordaunt roughly, startled out of all politeness.

'I promised her I would adopt him; surely, it is nothing so very much out of the way.'

'Adopt a beggar's brat out of the village—a child not born in wedlock—a boy, of all things in the world! Irene, you must be out of your senses!'

'But it is done every day.'

'It may be done occasionally by people who have an interest in Ragged Schools, or the Emigration Society, or the Shoe Black Brigade, or who have arrived at the meridian of life without any nearer ties of their own; but for a young lady, just married, and with her hands full of occupation, both for the present and the future, it would be absurd—unheard of—impossible!'

'But what occupation have I that need prevent my looking after a little child, Philip? If—if—'

'If what?'

'I don't know why I should be so silly as not to like to mention it,' she goes on hurriedly, though with an effort; 'but supposing I—I—had a child of my own; *that* would not interfere with my duties as mistress here, would it?'

'And would you like to have a child of your own, darling?' he answers sweetly, but irrelevantly, and relapsing into all his usual

tenderness. Were Irene politic, she might win him over at this moment to grant her anything. A smile, an answering look, a pressure of the hand, would do it, and bring him to her feet, a slave! But, in one sense of the word, she is not politic; her nature is too open. She cannot bring her heart to stoop to a deception, however plausible, for her own advantage. And so she answers her husband's question frankly.

'No! not at all, Philip. I've told you that a dozen times already! but I want to take this poor little boy away from Mrs. Cray, and bring him up respectably in mind and body.'

Colonel Mordaunt's momentary softness vanishes, and his 'grumpiness' returns in full force.

'Then I object altogether. I'm not so fond of brats at any time as to care to have those of other people sprawling over my house—and a pauper's brat of all things. You must dismiss the idea at once.'

'But I have *promised*, Philip.'

'You promised more than you can perform.'

'But I *swore* it. Oh, Philip! you will not make me go back from an oath made to the dying! I shall hate myself for ever if you do.'

'You had no right to take such an oath without consulting me.'

'Perhaps not; I acknowledge it; but it is done, and I cannot recede from my given word.'

'I refuse to endorse it. I will have no bastard brought up at my expense.'

The coarseness of the retort provokes her; she colours crimson, and recoils from him.

'How cruel! how pitiless of you to use that term! You have no charity! Some day you may need it for yourself!'

At that he turns upon her, crimson too, and panting.

'What makes you say so? What have you heard?'

'More than I ever thought to hear from your lips. Oh, Philip, I did not think you could be so unkind to me!' and she turns from him weeping, and goes up to her own room, leaving him conscience-stricken in the porch. It is their first quarrel; the first time angry words have ever passed between them, and he is afraid to follow her, lest he should meet with a rebuff, so he remains there, moody and miserable, and before half an hour has elapsed, could bite out his tongue for every word it uttered.

The idea of the adopted child is as unpalatable to him as ever: it appears a most hare-brained and absurd idea to him; but he cannot bear to think that he should have been cross with Irene, or that she should have been betrayed into using hasty words to him.

Oh, that first quarrel! how infinitely wretched it makes humanity, and what a shock it is to hear hot and angry words pouring from the lips that have never opened yet for us except in blessing.

Better thus, though—better, hot and angry words, than cold and calm.

The direst death for love to die is when it is reasoned into silence by the voice of indifference and good sense.

Othello's passion was rough and deadly, but while it lasted it must have been very sweet pain. Was it not kinder to smother Desdemona whilst it was at white heat than to let her live to see the iron cool?

But Colonel Mordaunt is in no mood for reasoning; he is simply miserable; and his mood ends—as all such moods do end for true lovers—by his creeping up to

Irene's side in the twilight, and humbly begging her forgiveness, which she grants him readily—crying a little over her own shortcomings the while—and then they make it up, and kiss, as husband and wife should do, and come downstairs together, and are very cheerful for the remainder of the evening, and never once mention the obnoxious subject that disturbed their peace.

The next morning is bright and beautiful: all nature appears jubilant, but between these two there is a slight reserve. All trace of discomfiture has passed—they are as loving and attentive to each other as before—but they are not quite so easy. With her first awakening, Irene's thoughts have flown to poor Myra. She wonders how she has passed the night, and vividly remembers that she promised to visit her in the morning; but Colonel Mordaunt says nothing on the subject, and Irene dares not broach it. She is so afraid of disturbing his restored serenity, or of appearing ungrateful for the extra love he has bestowed on her in order to efface the remembrance of their misunderstanding.

Every one knows what it is to feel like this after a quarrel with one whom we love. The storm was so terrible, and the succeeding peace is so precious to us, we are not brave enough to risk a repetition of our trouble by alluding to the subject that provoked it. So Irene dresses in silence, thinking much of her interview with Myra of the day before, and wondering how it will all end, and longing that her husband would be the first to revert to it. But they meet at breakfast; and nothing has been said.

Miss Cavendish is particularly

lively this morning. She knows there was a slight disagreement between her host and hostess last evening, and she is anxious to dispel the notion that any one observed it but themselves.

'What a beautiful day!' she says, as she enters the room: 'bright, but not too warm. Ah, Colonel Mordaunt, who was it promised to take us all over to picnic at Walmesley Castle on the first opportunity?

'One who is quite ready to redeem his promise, madam,' replies the Colonel gallantly, 'if his commander-in-chief will give him leave. But I am only under orders, you know—only under orders.'

'Not very strict ones, I imagine. What do you say, Irene? Is this not just the day for Walmesley? And Mary and I must leave you the beginning of the week.'

'Oh! do let us go, Irene,' interposes her cousin.

'It will be awful fun,' says Oliver Ralston. 'Just what we were wishing for; is it not, Miss Cavendish?'

Irene thinks of Myra in a moment: it is on the tip of her tongue to remonstrate, and say she cannot go to-day of all days in the week; but she glances at her husband, and the expression of his face makes her hesitate.

'Philip, what would you wish me to do?' she says, timidly.

'I want you to please yourself, my dear; but I see no reason why you should not go. The weather is beautiful, the distance nothing—a matter of fourteen miles; just a pleasant drive. And I am sure it will do you good, besides giving pleasure to our guests. If you ask my opinion, I say, let's go.'

'That's right, uncle,' shouts Oliver; 'she can have nothing to say after that. Now, Irene' (for

it had been settled between these young people that, considering the equality of their ages, they should address each other by their Christian names), 'let's make an inroad on the larder (what a blessing it is old Quckett's not here to prevent us!), pack up the hamper, order round the carriage, put on our hats, and the thing is done.'

'Shall we be long away?' demands Irene, anxiously, of her husband.

He observes her indifference to the proposed plan, guesses its cause, and frowns.

'That depends entirely on our own will. But if our *friends*' (with a slight stress on the word) 'enjoy themselves at the Castle, I see no reason why we should not remain as long as it gives them pleasure.'

'Dear Irene, pray don't go against your inclination,' urges Mrs. Cavendish. Colonel Mor-dauant answers for her—with a laugh.

'Don't indulge her, Mrs. Cavendish. She is only lazy. She will enjoy herself as much as any of us when she is once there. Come, my darling, see after the commissariat department at once, and I will order the carriage. The sooner we start the better. Oliver, will you ride, or take the box seat?' And so it is all settled without further intervention on her part.

She goes upstairs to prepare for the expedition, feeling very undecided and rather miserable. After all, does not her duty lie more towards the fulfilment of her husband's wishes than an engagement with one who has no real claims upon her. Only, she is so sorry that she promised to visit Myra this morning. Perhaps she is expecting her even at this moment—straining her ears to catch the sound of her footstep—wait-

ing in feverish anxiety to repose some further confidence in her. The thought is too painful. Could she not run down to the cottage before they go, if it was only for ten minutes? She hears her husband in his dressing-room.

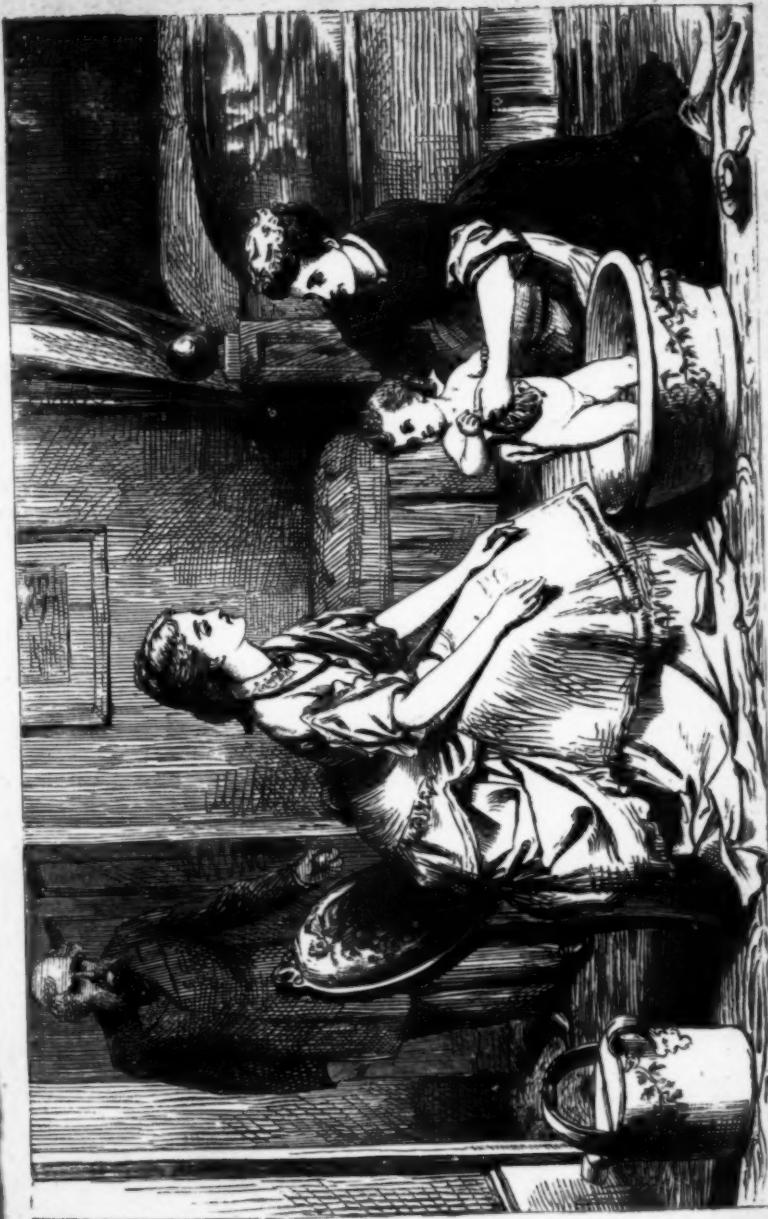
'Philip,' she says, hurriedly, 'I promised to see poor Myra again this morning. Is there no time before we start?'

'Time!' he echoes; 'why, the carriage is coming round now, and the ladies have their things on. You've gone mad on the subject of that woman, Irene; but if it's absolutely important you should see her again to-day, you must go down in the evening. Come, my darling,' he continues, changing his manner to a caressing, coaxing tone, which it is most difficult to combat, 'we had quite enough fuss over this subject yesterday: let us have a peaceful, happy day all to ourselves, for once in a way; there's a dear girl.' And, after that, there is nothing more for Irene to do but to walk off with her guests to Walmesley Castle.

They are a merry party; for it is just one of those glorious days when to live is to enjoy; and she tries to be merry, too, for gloom and ill-humour have no part in her composition: but she cannot help her thoughts reverting, every now and then, to Myra, with a tinge of self-reproach for not having been braver. Yet her husband sits opposite to her, his eye glowing with pride as it rests upon her countenance, and a quiet pressure of the hand or foot telling her at intervals that, with whomsoever he may appear to be occupied, his thoughts are always hers; and she cannot decide whether she has done right or wrong. It is useless, however, to ponder the question now, when she is



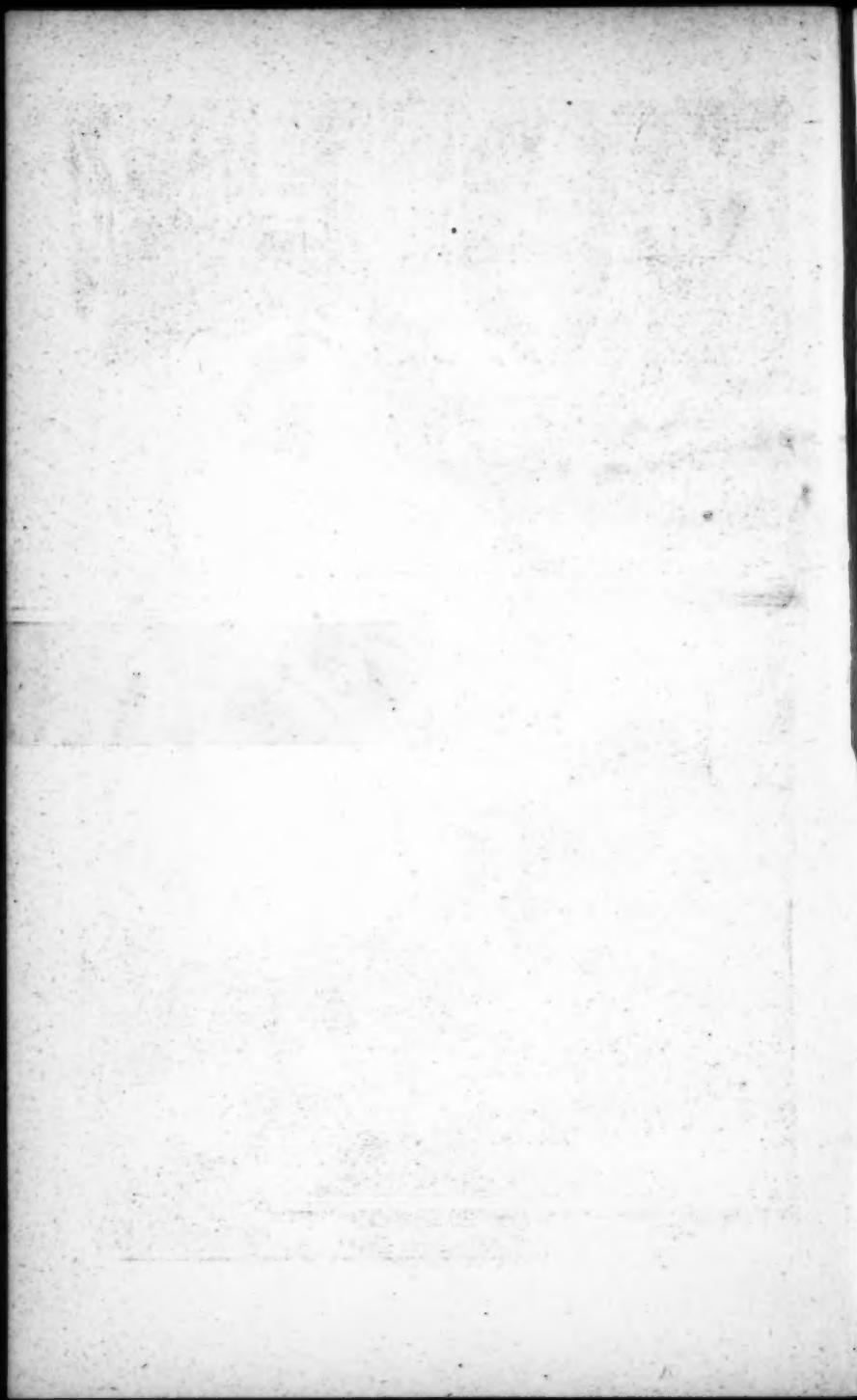
the hand before telling the interviewee that, with whom ever she may agree to go, she is to be a good girl, and to be a good mother. The interviewee is then asked to make a flamingo out of flamingo paper, and a picture is taken of the hand before telling the interviewee that, with whom ever she may agree to go, she is to be a good girl, and to be a good mother.



'NO INTENTIONS.'

'Smiling and smiling until they have made him smile again.'

Drawn by Frank McEntee.



already miles away from Priestley; and so she tries to dismiss it from her mind, with a resolution to pay her promised visit the minute she returns.

Walmsley Castle is a ruin, situated in a very picturesque part of the county: and, allowing for a long drive there and a fatiguing exploration, followed by a lengthy luncheon and a lazy discussion on the award, it is not surprising that morning merged into noon, and noon into evening, before our party were aware of the fact, and that the first thing that calls Irene's attention to the hour is a cool breeze blowing across the hills, which makes her shiver.

'How cold it has turned,' she says suddenly, as she changes her position. 'Why, Philip, what o'clock is it?'

'Just five, dear,' he answers quietly.

'Five! Five o'clock! It never can be five.'

'Within a few minutes. I suppose we had better be thinking of going home, or we shall be late for dinner.'

'I hardly think we shall have much appetite for dinner after this,' says Mrs. Cavendish, laughing, as she regards the scanty remnants of their meal.

'Five! It cannot be so late as five,' repeats Irene, in a voice of distress. 'Oh! Philip, do order the horses to be put to at once. Poor Myra!'

Her expression is so pleading that he rises to do her bidding without delay; but he cannot resist a grumble as he does it. But she does not heed him: she heeds nothing now but her own thoughts, which have flown back to her broken promise, with a dreadful fear that she may be too late to redeem it. She remembers everything that happened with sickening fidelity: how Myra longed

to detain her, and only let her go upon her given word that she would return. What right had she to break it—for any one, even for Philip? What must the dying woman think of her?

She is so absorbed in this idea that she cannot speak to any one: her conduct seems quite changed from what it did in the morning. She is a pitiful coward in her own eyes now. And as she drives back to Priestley, she sits alone, miserable and silent, longing to reach home, and fancying the road twice as long as when they last traversed it.

'Are you ill, my dear?' says Mrs. Cavendish. 'Has the day fatigued you?'

'You had better not speak to Irene,' replies Colonel Mordaunt, in her stead. 'She is in one of her Lady Bountiful moods. You and I are not worth attending to in comparison.'

She is too low-spirited even to be saucy in reply: and presently her husband's hand creeps into hers; and she knows that her reticence has pleased him, and gives it a good squeeze for reward.

But as the carriage drives up to the Court her quick eye catches sight of a dirty little figure crouched by the doorsteps, and all her vague forebodings return.

'Oh, there is Jenny!' she exclaims excitedly. 'I felt sure there was something wrong. Jenny, what is it?'—as the carriage reaches the door—'is Myra worse?'

'Please, mum,' says Jenny, with a bob, 'she's as bad as ever she can be: and mother says, please, mum, could you come down and see her, for she's a-goin' fast, and she keeps on a-callin' for you. And mother says——'

'Oh! I will go at once,' says Irene, leaping down from the carriage. 'Philip, dearest, you won't

be angry.' And with that, begins to run down the drive.

'Stop, Irene, stop!' cries her husband; but she does not heed or hear him; and, having handed the other ladies out, he drives after her, and catches her before she has reached the outside of the grounds.

'Stop, dearest! Get in. I will drive down with you,' he exclaims, as he overtakes her.

'You, Philip!'

'Yes, why not? Am I to have no share in the troubles of this kind little heart?'

'Oh, Philip! Thank you! You are too good to me! It is such a comfort to me!' And, with that, she seizes the great rough hand that has drawn her so tenderly to his side, and cries over it quietly. He smears her tears all over her face with his pocket-handkerchief in well-meant attempts to wipe them away, after the manner of men, but not another word is exchanged between them till they reach the cottage.

There all is silent. The lower part of the house seems deserted. And Irene, leaving her husband pacing the garden in front, finds her way quietly upstairs.

Myra's room seems full. Mrs. Cray is there with her soapy satellites, and all her children, except Joel and Jenny; and at first Irene's entrance is unnoticed. But as the women nearest the door perceive her, they fall back.

'Ah! you've come too late, mum,' says Mrs. Cray reproachfully. 'I doubt if she'll recognise you. She's a'most gone, poor creature.'

'I am so sorry,' replies Irene, making her way up to the bed on which the sick girl lies motionless; 'but I could not come before. Dear Myra, don't you know me?' And she lays her

warm lips upon the clammy forehead. The dying eyes quiver—open—recognise her; and a faint smile hovers over the lead-coloured lips.

'We were—we were—'she gasps, and then stops, still gasping, and unable to proceed.

'Is it anything you want to tell me?' says Irene gently; trying to help her.

'We were—' commences Myra again; but Death will not let her finish. 'Tommy!' she ejaculates, with a world of meaning in her eyes, but with an effort so painful to behold that Irene involuntarily closes her own: and when she opens them again Myra's are glazed, her lips are parted, and two quick, sobbing breaths herald the exit of her soul.

'She's a-going,' screams Mrs. Cray, rushing forward to assist in the Great Change.

'She is gone,' says Irene quietly, as, awestruck, she sinks down by the bedside and covers her face with her hands.

'Poor dear!' quoths Mrs. Cray, in order to better the occasion, 'how bad she's bin a wanting of you, mum, all to-day, to be sure; and how she's bin a-asking every minute when I thought you'd be here. It seemed to me as though the poor creature couldn't die till she'd seen you again. I've seen 'em lie like this, bless 'em, for days a-fighten for their breath, and not able to go, when there's bin a pigeon-feather in the ticking, but never from trying to see a face as that poor thing has longed to see yours. And I'm sure, if I've sent one message to the Court to-day, I've sent a dozen, and she a-watchin' each time as though—'

'Oh! don't tell me! please, don't tell me!' entreats Irene, as the whole mournful panorama passes before her mental vision, and over-

whelms her with reproach, that ends in sobbing. Colonel Mordaunt hears the sound of her tears through the open casement, and comes to the bottom of the stairs.

'Irene—Irene!' he says, remonstrating.

'Oh! please to walk up, sir; it's all over,' says Mrs. Cray, with her apron to her eyes, and, for the sake of his wife, the Colonel does walk up. When he reaches the little room, he is distressed beyond measure at the sight before him; the poor dead, wasted body stretched upon the bed, and his beautiful Irene crying beside it as though her heart would break.

'Come! my dearest,' he says soothingly, 'you can do no more good here. Let me take you home.'

But she turns from him: she will not answer him: she does not even seem to be aware that he is present.

'I hate myself, I hate myself,' she says vehemently; 'why did I ever consent to go to that detestable picnic, when my place was here? I promised her, poor dear girl, that I would come again this morning, and she has been waiting and watching for me, and thinking that I had forgotten. And her last word was to remind me of the oath I took to protect her child—and even that I must break. And she is about me now; I feel it: despising me for my weakness and my falsehood. But she cannot think me more degraded than I think myself.'

Colonel Mordaunt is shocked at the expression: he cannot bear that it should be connected, even wrongfully, with any action of Irene's.

'Degraded! my darling! what can make you use such a term with reference to yourself—you who are everything that is true and noble.'

'True, to break my promise to the dying—*noble*, to swear an oath and not fulfil it! Oh, very true and very noble! I wish you could see my conduct as it looks to me.'

'If that is really the light in which you view the matter, Irene, I will oppose no further obstacle to the satisfaction of your conscience. You shall keep your promise, and adopt the child.'

At that she lifts her tear-stained face and regards him curiously.

'Are you in earnest, Philip?'

'Quite in earnest! I could hardly jest on such a subject.'

'Oh, thank you! thank you—you have made me feel so happy,' and, regardless of spectators (for though the room is nearly cleared by this time, the laundress and some of her children still remain in attendance), up comes her sweet mouth to meet his. Colonel Mordaunt is already repaid for his generosity. And then Irene turns to the bed.

'Myra!' she says, as naturally as though the poor mother were still alive, 'I will be true to my word. I will take your little one and bring him up for you; and when we meet again you will forgive me for this last breach of faith.'

At this appeal, Mrs. Cray pricks up her ears; she understands it at once, and the idea of getting rid of Tommy is too welcome to be passed over in silence; but, being a cunning woman, she foresees that it will strengthen his claim if she professes to have been made aware of it beforehand.

'Your good lady is talking of taking the poor child, Colonel,' she says, whining, 'which I'm sure it will be a blessing to him, and may be he'll be a blessing to her. Ah, you see I knows all about it: I've bin a mother to that poor girl as lies there, and who should she tell her troubles

and 'opes to, if it wearnt to me ? But I kep' her misfortune close, didn't I, mum ?—not a word passed my lips but that all the village might have heard, which it's proved by not a soul knowing of it, except ourselves and Joell—and one or two neighbours, maybe, and my brother as lives over at Fenton. But now she's gone—poor dear—and you've promised to do kindly by the child, I don't care who knows it, for it can't harm no one.'

'Then your niece told you of my wife's offer to look after her little boy?' says Colonel Mordaunt, falling into the trap.

'Oh, lor! yes, sir; a many times: which I've looked forward to her doing so, knowing that no lady could break her promise; and she's always been so fond of Tommy, too; I'm sure he'll take to her just as though she was his mother. And it's a fine thing for the child; though it'll near break my heart to part with him.'

This last assertion is a little too much, even for Colonel Mordaunt's softened mood, and he rises to his feet hastily.

'Come, dearest!' he says to his wife, 'it is time we were going.'

'And Tommy?' she replies inquiringly.

'You don't want to take him with you now, surely?' is the dubious rejoinder.

'No! I suppose not! but—how will he come?'

'Lor, mum! I'll bring him up this evening—he shan't be kep' from you, not half an hour more than's needful; but I must reddle him up a bit first, and give him a clean face.'

'Oh! never mind his face,' begins Irene; 'but her husband cuts her short.'

'There there, my love! you hear, the child will be up this evening. Surely that is all that

can be required. Good evening, Mrs. Cray. Come, Irene; and with one farewell look at Myra's corpse, she follows him from the room.

All the way home the husband and wife sit very close to each other, but they do not speak. The scene they have just witnessed has sobered them. Colonel Mordaunt is the first to break the silence, and he does so as the carriage stops before the hall-door of the Court.

'I am thinking what the d—l you'll do with it,' he ejaculates suddenly.

'With the child?—oh! a thousand things,' she says joyously. Her voice startles him; he turns and looks into her face; it is beaming with happiness and a wonderful new light that he has never seen there before.

'Why, Irene,' he exclaims, as he holds her out, 'what is this? you look as if you had come into a fortune.'

'Because I have such a dear, good old husband,' she whispers fondly, as she passes him and runs upstairs to dress for dinner.

Of course the whole conversation at the dinner-table is furnished by the discussion of Mrs. Mordaunt's strange freak. By the time Irene descends to the dining-room, she finds the story is known all over the house; and the opinions on it are free and various. Mrs. Cavendish holds up her hands at the very idea.

'My dear Colonel! you spoil this child. Fancy, letting her adopt the brat of no one knows who!—the trouble it will give you—the money it will cost.'

'Oh, Irene has promised faithfully I shall have no trouble in the matter,' laughs the Colonel, who, having once given his consent to the arrangement, will never betray

that it was against his will; ' and as for the expence—well, I don't think one poor little mortal will add much to the expenditure of the household.'

'Particularly as I intend to pay for him out of my pin money,' says Irene.

'But the nuisance, my dear: no money will pay for that. Ah! you won't believe me now—but by-and-by—wait a bit—you'll see!' with mysterious nods and winks, of which her niece takes no notice.

'She'll have to end by turning him into a buttons-boy,' remarks her husband, who is secretly delighted with the pantomime.

'I'm sure I shall do nothing of the sort,' says Irene quickly, and then calms down again. 'I mean that I shall grow too fond of the child to make him into a servant.'

'You fond of a baby, Irene,' says Mary Cavendish; 'that is just what puzzles me—why I'm sure you always said you hated children.'

'Oh, very well, then! keep your own opinion—you know so much more about it than I do,' with a little rising temper.

'Irene, my darling!' says the Colonel soothingly.

'Why do they all set upon me, then, Philip? What is there so extraordinary in my wishing to befriend a wretched little outcast? I'm sure I almost begin to wish I had never seen the child at all.'

'Let us change the subject,' is her husband's only answer.

* * *

But when the dinner is over and the evening draws to a close, Irene begins to move restlessly up and down the house. She has already taken her maid Phœbe into her confidence, and the girl, being country bred and with no absurd notions above her station, is almost as delighted at the

prospect of having the little child to take care of as her mistress. And they have arranged that he is to sleep in Phœbe's bed, which is large and airy. And before the housemaid comes up with a broad grin on her countenance to announce that Mrs. Cray, the laundress, has brought 'a little boy for missus,' these extravagant young women have sliced up half-a-dozen or more good articles of wear, in order that the young rascal may have a wardrobe.

In the midst of their arrangements, Master Tommy, clean as to the outside platter, but smelling very strong, after the manner of the Great Unwashed, even though they dwell in villages, is introduced by his guardian. Irene cannot talk to Mrs. Cray to-night, she dismisses the subject of poor Myra and her death struggles summarily; and thrusting a five-pound note into the laundress's hand, gets rid of her as soon as she decently can. She is longing to have the little child all to herself, and she does not feel as though he were really her own until the woman who beats him is once more outside the door. And then she turns to Phœbe triumphantly.

'And now, Phœbe, what shall we do with him?'

'I should wash him, ma'am,' replies Phœbe, following the advice of the great Mr. Dick, with respect to David Copperfield.

'Of course! we'll give him a warm bath. Run downstairs and get the water, Phœbe. And is this his night gown?' examining the bundle of rags that Mrs. Cray has left behind her. 'Oh! what a wretched thing; but, luckily, it is clean. He must have new night-gowns, Phœbe, at once, and—'

'He must have *everything* new, ma'am, bless his heart!' exclaims Phœbe enthusiastically, as she disappears in quest of the water.

When she is gone Irene lifts the child upon her knee, and gazes in his face.

'Tommy,' she says gently, 'Tommy, will you love me?'

'Iss,' replies Tommy, who has seen her often enough to feel familiar with her.

'You are going to be my little boy now, Tommy.'

'Iss,' repeats Tommy, as he surveys the wonderful fairy-land in which he finds himself. It must be recorded of Tommy, that, with all his faults, he is not-shy.

In another minute Phoebe is back with the water, and the bath is filled, and the two women undress the child together and plunge him in, and sponge and lather him, kneeling on each side the bath the while, and laughing at their own awkwardness at the unaccustomed task. And then Tommy gets the soap into his eyes, and roars, which cheerful sound attracting Colonel Mordaunt's attention as he mounts the stairs, causes him to peep into the open bedroom-door unseen. And there he watches his young wife and her maid first kiss the naked cupid to console him, and then return to the soaping and splashing until they have made him smile again. And when the washing is completed, and Phoebe stretches out her arms to take the child and dry him, Colonel Mordaunt sees with astonishment that her mistress will not allow it.

'No, no, Phoebe! give him to me,' she says authoritatively, as she prepares her lap to receive the dripping infant; and then, as the servant laughingly obeys her orders, and carries the bath into the next room, he watches Irene's lips pressed on the boy's undried face.

'My little Tommy!' she says, as she does so.

He sees and hears it, turns away with a sigh, and a heart heavy, he knows not wherefore, and goes

downstairs as he ascended them, unnoticed.

A week has passed. Poor Myra's form has just been left to rest beneath a rough hillock of clay in the churchyard, and Joel Cray is seated in the sanded kitchen of his mother's cottage, his arms cast over the deal table, and his head bent down despairingly upon them.

Mrs. Cray, returning abruptly from having just 'dropped in' to a neighbour's to display her 'black' and furnish all funeral details, finds him in this position.

'Come, lad,' she says roughly, but not unkindly, 'it's no use frettin'; it won't bring her back agin.'

'There's no call for you to tell me that, mother,' he answers wearily, as he raises two hollow eyes from the shelter of his hands; 'it's writ too plainly here'—striking his breast—but you might have warned me she was goin'.'

'Warned you! when all the world could see it! Why, the poor creetur has had death marked in her face for the last six months; and Mrs. Jones has jest bin a sayin' it's a wonder as she lasted so long,' replies Mrs. Cray, as she hangs her new bonnet on a nail in the kitchen wall, and carefully folds up her shawl.

'All the world but me, you mean. 'Twould have come a bit easier if I had seen it, perhaps. Why, 'twas only the other day I was beggin' of her for to be my wife, and now, to think I've just come from burying her! Oh, good Lord! and down sinks the poor fellow's head again, whilst the tears trickle through his earth-stained fingers.

Mrs. Cray loves her son after her own fashion. It is, in a great measure, her love for him and sympathy with his disappointment that have made her hard upon

Myra and Myra's child; and she desires to give him comfort in his present trouble. So she draws a chair close beside him, and sits down deliberately to tear open all his worst wounds. But it is not entirely her want of education that begets this peculiarity, for the example has been set her, ever since the world began, by people as well-meaning, and far less ignorant than herself.

'Now, where's the good of thinkin' of that, lad?' she says, as soothingly as her harsh voice will permit. 'She'd never have bin yours had she lived ever so long; and all the better, too, for no woman can make a good wife when her fancy's fixed upon another man.'

'And if hers were, you needn't remind a feller of it,' he replies uneasily.

'Oh! but I says it for your good. Not that I wants to speak a word against the poor thing as is gone; for when a fellow-creetur's under the ground, let his faults be buried atop of him, say I; that's my maxim, and I keeps to it. Still, there's no denying poor Myra were very flighty, and a deal of trouble to us all. I'm sure I thought this afternoon, when I see the handsome grave Simmons had dug for her, and all the village looking on at the burial, and Tommy brought down from the Court by the Colonel's lady herself, in a brand-new suit of black, and with a crape bow and a feather in his hat, that no one would have thought as seed it that we was only burying a ——'

'Mother, what are you going to say?' demands Joel, as, with clenched hand and glowing eyes, he springs to his feet.

'Lor! you needn't fly out so. I wasn't going to say nothing but the truth.'

'The truth! But is it the truth? Who knows that it's the truth?'

'Why, you wouldn't be after saying as she was an honest woman, Joel?'

'I don't know. I'd rather be saying nothin' of her at all. My poor girl, trodden down and spit on! And she, who was the bonniest lass for miles round Priestley. Mother, I must leave this place.'

'Leave! when you've just got such a fine situation under Farmer Green! Have you lost your senses, lad?'

'I don't know, and I don't care. I don't seem to have nothin' now; but I can't bide here any longer; there's somethin' in the air that chokes me.'

'But where would you be going?'

'I can't tell that either. Jest where chance may take me. Only, be sure of one thing, mother—I don't come back to Priestley till I've cleared her name or killed the man who ruined her.'

'You're going in search of him, Joel?'

'It's bin growing on me ever since that evening I came home and found her dead. I won't believe that Myra was the girl to give herself over to destruction; but if she were—well, then the man who destroyed her must answer for it to me.'

'But what'll I do without you?' commences Mrs. Cray, as her apron goes up to receive the maternal droppings of despair.

'You'll do well enough, mother. If I didn't feel that, I wouldn't go. And the child (if it wasn't for her, I could say, "Curse him!") But I won't. No, Myra, never you fear; he'll allays have a friend in me), he's off your hands, and well provided for. So you've nothin' but your own little ones to look after. And you'll have friends at the Court, too. You won't miss me.'

'But how are you ever to find the gentleman, Joel?'

'I know his name was "'Amil-

ton," and I'll track that name through the world until I light on him. And I saw him once, mother. 'Twas only for a few minutes, but I marked him well—a tall, upstanding feller, with dark hair and blue eyes. The child's the very moral of him, curse him! And I'll search till I come across that face again; and when I comes across it, we'll have our reckoning, or I'm much mistaken.'

'And how shall you live meanwhile?'

'As I always have lived, by my hands. And now, mother, put up my bundle, and let me be going.'

'To-night, lad? Oh! you can't be in earnest.'

'Yes, to-night. I tell you there's something in the air of this place that stops my breathing. I could no more lie down and sleep in my bed here, while she lies out yonder with the lumps of clay upon her tender breast, than I could eat while she was starvin'. Let me go, mother. If you don't want to see me mad, let me go where I can still fancy she's a-living here with you, and that coffin and that shroud is all a horrid dream.'

And so, regardless of his mother's entreaties or his own well-doing, Joel Cray goes forth from Priestley. Whilst the neighbours are preparing to retire to their couches, and the dead woman's child, alike unconscious of his motherless condition and the stigma resting on his birth, is lying, flushed and rosy, in his first sleep in Phoebe's bed, the uncouth figure shambles slowly from the laundress's cottage, and takes the high road to Fenton, which is on the way to the nearest town.

But before he quits the village he passes, a little shamefacedly, even though the dusk of the summer's eve has fallen and he is quite alone, through the wooden wicket that guards God's acre, and finds his way up to the new-made grave.

But it looks so desolate and mournful, covered in with its hillock of damp red earth, that he cannot stand the sight, and as he gazes at it, his honest breast begins to heave.

'I can't abide it,' he whispers hoarsely, 'to leave her here—the thought of it will haunt me night and day.'

And then he stoops and gathers up a morsel of the uninviting marl studded with rough stones.

'And to think you should be lying under this—you whose head should be resting on my bosom—oh, my darlin', my darlin'! my heart'll break!'

And for a few moments the poor wretch finds relief in a gush of tears.

'I'm glad no one saw 'em,' he ponders quaintly, as the last of the low sobs breaks from his labouring bosom; 'but I feels all the better. And I swear by 'em—by these here tears which the thought of you has drawed from me, Myra, that I don't look upon your grave again until I've had satisfaction for the wrong he's done you. Oh! my lost darlin', I shall never love another woman! Good-bye, till we meets in a happier world than this has been for both of us!'

And when the morning breaks, he is miles away from Priestley.

* * * *

(To be continued.)

SOCIAL SUBJECTS.

MILLINERS' BILLS—MODERN INTOLERANCE—“EUGENE ARAM” AT THE LYCEUM—
ARE WE CHRISTIANS?—HOLIDAY TIME.

ENGLAND is generally supposed to be a very wealthy country, and the typical *pater-familias* is ordinarily represented as being the fortunate possessor of a lengthy purse; still there are limits to our balances at our bankers, and it is said—nor have we any reason to doubt the truth of the assertion—that very loud complaints have been made during the season of the extravagant sums of money that have to be paid to those commercial artists who do us the favour to clothe our sisters, wives, and daughters. I do not understand the *arcana* of milliners' bills myself, but I am assured, on competent authority, that the payment demanded for ladies' dresses is out of all proportion to the cost of the material and the price of labour. Considering the high price of the ordinary necessaries of life, people with limited incomes are beginning seriously to inquire whether the present extravagance in dress ought not to be decidedly checked; and while few persons are so mean as to say that the spectacle of a well-dressed English lady can be anything but delightful to the eyes, many feel themselves justified in complaining of the large sums which have to be paid for such an enjoyment. I venture to suggest that a remedy is by no means inaccessible. Let the principle of co-operation, which has been so successfully applied to groceries and the common necessities of daily life, be tried in millinery. Why should not ladies start a co-operative dress-making business? They would have no

difficulty in procuring the manufactured article at trade price; they could engage an accomplished *modiste* to superintend the concern under the supervision of a committee, and they might pay their own workpeople. They would then have the satisfaction of being free from the importunity, and, in many cases, the tyranny, of shopkeepers; they would have no qualm of conscience with regard to overworked and unpaid sempstresses, and the painful music of the ‘Song of the Shirt’ would not disturb their dreams; and they would be spared the black looks and half-suppressed oaths with which papa greets the milliners' bills at Christmas; and we should hear less about those underhand dealings, and scarcely honourable trafficking in family jewels, which not unfrequently vex us now; society would recover its confidence in itself; and Lizardie would be rare. It is high time that we should begin a little domestic stock-taking; and it is possible that an accurate review of our mutual social positions, though accompanied by some disagreeable shocks at first, would, undoubtedly, tend to a greater feeling of security, and teach us how to avoid very uncomfortable pecuniary sensations in the future.

There is a class of persons in existence that bids fair to become a very gross nuisance. I allude to those very excellent, but extremely narrow-minded people, who have made up their minds that Paradise is only to be won upon certain terms, which terms

they have the exclusive right of dictating. It really would be ludicrous, if it was not tiresome, to hear a disciple of this school—if school such an infants' nursery may be termed—deliberately condemning to everlasting perdition those who have the misfortune to differ from him. Unfortunately, the system of anathema is of respectable antiquity, and can be fortified with many precedents; still it has usually been pronounced with the solemn semblance of authority, and has, at all events, commanded attention up to a certain point. But when a small knot of individuals, whose ideas on things sacred and profane are decidedly nebulous and hopelessly entangled, endeavour to lay down laws on subjects of abstruse speculation in theological spheres, we confess to a feeling of irritable impatience. Into the abstract merits of such questions it is certainly not the mission of *FREE LANCE* to enter, but he emphatically desires to record his protest against the policy of a batch of ecclesiastical prosecutions which he understands are imminent. Has not the boasted civilisation of the nineteenth century outgrown such barbarous appeals to the civil arm? When Mr. Miall brought forward his motion tending to the disestablishment of the Church of England, Mr. Gladstone, urged on by a nemesis, which in any other case would have been vastly amusing, strongly pressed, in opposition to Mr. Miall, the fact that the disestablished Irish Church is busying itself with the question how it may narrow its limits and exclude all but the lispers of a certain shibboleth; and, in fact, is fast justifying the epigrammatic remark of one of its own dignitaries, to the effect that it is transforming itself into the newest and feeblest of the Christian sects. A similar senti-

ment seems to actuate the litigious gentlemen who appear to think that consciences can be compelled by law, and that discipline and doctrine can be regulated by long purses. It has long been the not unworthy boast of the Church of England that it is the most liberal communion in Christendom; we venture to express a hope that she will not be deprived of such a noble position, and we may congratulate the House of Commons that it was not misled by the plausible statements and special pleading of the member for Bradford. But we may well state our belief that those eminently pious personages who are perpetually exhibiting their desire to drag their religious opponents before the law courts are far worse foes to the Establishment than Mr. Miall is; and history has shown us that we should contemplate with feelings akin to horror and dismay the position of the Church of England, if Puritan intolerance were ever to gain the ascendancy. Protestant espionage appears inclined to rival the Inquisition. Let Protestantism remember what itself once suffered from bigotry, and adopt a wiser and a nobler course. The apology *FREE LANCE* has to offer for dilating on such topics in these columns is, that religious squabbles have unfortunately become social subjects, and ecclesiastical partisanship makes itself apparent at the dinner-table, and even in the ball-room. Whether such atmospheres are favourable to conversions may be doubted, but, as a matter of fact, Monseigneur Capel, Mr. Capel Molyneux, Father Ignatius, and the last decision of the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council are as freely talked about and canvassed as the winner of the Derby, the Royal Academy,

the 'New Magdalen' at the Olympic, and the latest fashions. In these days there is no particular time for anything, nor much veneration for antiquity. Granted. But, for goodness' sake, do not let us try to force each other's speculative opinions by an appeal to law. There is still in force, I believe, a statute imposing a pecuniary penalty upon every person not attending their parish church on Sundays: it is to be hoped that the legal advisers of the Crown will not draw Mr. Lowe's attention to it, or we may live to witness a series of revenue prosecutions which may drive us into the arms of the intelligent Hindoo.

Belief in ordinary dramatic criticism is a most delightful quality to possess. It occasions so many surprises. We read the account of a new play, and rush anxiously to secure a stall because we are assured that it is of no ordinary interest, that the construction is singularly skilful, the dialogue epigrammatic, and the characters well worked out. Well, we get our stall, and we assist at the representation and are disappointed. We see a very ordinary piece of workmanship, we hear conversation, pointed it may be, but extraordinarily rude, and the personages in whom we are supposed to take a certain amount of interest turn out to be very commonplace. Then we read of another new play, which, while not lacking a considerable amount of dramatic power, is yet ill constructed and extremely lugubrious. We go and see it, and are much pleased, and do not at all agree with the gloomy view entertained by the critic on whose judgment we were disposed to rely. The result is that we begin to think that the dramatic criticism of the present day is merely

the expression of an unscientific opinion; that, in fact, it is not criticism, properly so called, but merely the relation of a temporary impression. Without, then, pretending to criticise, I desire to record my opinion on the merits of Mr. W. G. Wills's play of 'Eugene Aram,' now being acted at the Lyceum Theatre. I take leave to say that I think it is the best thing that Mr. Wills has done. He has contrived to sustain an extraordinary amount of personal interest in one character throughout a three-act drama. Plot there is absolutely none. We see that the hero of the piece has a terrible secret weighing upon his mind, and from the very commencement of the representation we are prepared for the *dénouement*, which is the confession of his crime. We see quite plainly what is going to happen, but still our interest is strongly maintained. The whole action passes within the compass of a few hours, and yet we are as absorbed as if we were engaged in working out a history. As a dramatic study, 'Eugene Aram' is far superior to 'Charles I.' Neither author nor actor could compel us to take any very deep interest in the feminine monarch; we witnessed a few historical episodes, loosely strung together, resulting in a parting between husband and wife, tender and touching, it is true, but not much more sensational than is usually exhibited in an uxorious farewell. But in 'Eugene Aram' the case is widely different. We see a nervous and highly sensitive nature struggling with an overwhelming sense of crime, exhibited by both author and actor in a most unconventional manner. Aram has murdered a man in a fit of terrible indignation; it is not *remorse* that weighs upon his conscience, as is generally the

case in such stage secrets; it is something, and it is not *fear*; it is a horror of the *crime* that pervades him. He would not undo what he has done; the retribution was barbarously just, but he has crimsoned his hands with blood, and nothing can wash out the stain. He thinks that he has won some sort of peace in the fresh love of a pure and innocent girl; the ghost that has haunted him for fifteen years seems likely to be laid at last. Mingling his life with another, so innocent and good, he fancies that he can begin a new existence. The veil will fall upon the past; the night is over; a new dawn will bring him hope and comfort. Suddenly the one accomplice of his crime appears upon the stage, and addresses Ruth Meadows, Aram's *fiancée*. Aram does not turn, but he hears the voice that memory has never forgotten, and, with a suppressed gasp, he murmurs his name. Mr. Irving's acting at this point was superb. Then Aram has an interview with the living possessor of his secret. Life has become dear to him through the new promise of future happiness with the girl he loves, and, perhaps for her sake more than for his own, he defies the coarser villain who had shared in the murder for the sake of plunder. This accomplice, Houseman, has reason to believe that much gold was hidden with the body, and as he thinks that all chance of detection has long since faded away, he has come back determined to search the cave where the victim was buried. But his conduct has already excited the curiosity of a gardener, who, in his turn, has gone to search the cave, and finds the remains of the murdered man. He rushes in, proclaims his discovery, and invites inspection. Aram's shattered nerves fail him

altogether now. Like Macbeth, he cannot look upon what he has done. He sinks beneath the weight of the awful deed, his sensitive nature has already borne too long, and he dies, confessing all to the girl, whose love is to the last unconquerable.

We may freely admit that the author has committed a serious dramatic mistake in laying the entire burden of his drama upon the shoulders of one actor, in making it, in fact, essentially a one-part piece; but Mr. Irving's genius has entirely justified him. The agony of soul depicted in the last act is unsurpassed upon the modern stage; the wretched man's appeal to Houseman, when he asks him how it is that their mutual crime has left no mark upon his healthy cheek, no shadow on his life; his cry to heaven in his bitter solitude, and his miserable complaint of the deep silence that receives his prayer, are wonderfully well conceived and carried out; and, at the last, as he relieves his mind by telling all to her in whose life-long tenderness he had looked for sweet solace for all he had endured, we see despair and determination linked together as he feels his end approach. The mind is intent upon telling all; the physical powers are growing weaker, one cold hand is in hers, the other feebly and listlessly plucks the grass beside him; but then, as he approaches the catastrophe of his tale, the flicker of life flares up, he starts from his recumbent posture on the old grey tomb with frantic energy, again enacts, with terrible reality, the one tragedy of his life, and then falls down and dies within the arms of his betrothed.

It is commonly objected to this play that it is dismal. I am not disposed to deny the truth of the assertion, but I do not allow that

there is any force in the objection. Of course, if the stage is to be nothing but a vehicle for an hour's thoughtless amusement, if the creations of the dramatist and the art of the actor are to serve no higher purpose than to provide a laugh, we may readily admit that both Mr. Wills and Mr. Irving have made a great mistake. But if we take a more elevated standpoint, and say that the true object of the stage is to reflect the life of man, to show us what we are, or what we may be—to hold up for our imitation and reprobation the virtues and vices of the world in which we live, then we should welcome with a true applause the art which unveils the secrets of our nature. While comedy has its place in satirising the follies of life, and in showing us our weaknesses in merry humour, we must not forget that tragedy may serve a nobler purpose. As it is, he is the welcome author who merely shows us the bright side of life; who dissipates its shadows with a joke; who sheds a halo of romance and humour round grave offences; who turns the great drama of human existence into a merry jest, and touches with the lightest finger the wounds that mar the sanctity of social bonds. But who that takes a higher view does not recall with eagerness the language of Schlegel when dilating on the charms of the drama? 'The theatre, where many arts are combined to produce a magical effect; where the most lofty and profound poetry has for its interpreter the most finished action, which is at once eloquence and an animated picture; while architecture contributes her splendid decorations, and painting her perspective illusions, and the aid of music is called in to attune the mind, or to heighten by its strains

the emotions which already agitate it; the theatre, in short, where the whole of the social and artistic enlightenment which a nation possesses, the fruit of many centuries of continued exertion, are brought into play within the representation of a few short hours, has an extraordinary charm for every age, sex, and rank, and has ever been the favourite amusement of every cultivated people. Here princes, statesmen, and generals behold the great events of past times, similar to those in which they themselves are called upon to act, laid open in their inmost springs and motives; here, too, the philosopher finds subject for profoundest reflection on the nature and constitution of man; with curious eye the artist follows the groups which pass rapidly before him, and from them impresses on his fancy the germ of many a future picture; the susceptible youth opens his heart to every elevated feeling; age becomes young again in recollection; even childhood sits with anxious expectation before the gaudy curtain, which is soon to be drawn up, with its rustling sound, and to display to it so many unknown wonders: all alike are diverted, all exhilarated, and all feel themselves for a time raised above the daily cares, the troubles, and the sorrows of life.'

That the persons we know least intimately are our individual selves is a saying which has become trite; and we are quite aware that the curious searcher who removes his contemplative studies from his fellow-creatures to a minute survey of himself will find himself considerably astonished, if he is honest in his self-examination. But perhaps Mr. Leslie Stephen succeeded in startling a larger proportion of the unre-

flecting world when, in a recent number of the 'Fortnightly Review,' he invited society to the consideration of the question, *Are we Christians?* It is, perhaps, a matter of regret that so able a writer shrank from candidly stating his own conclusions, and has, after all, merely contributed to the literature of the day an article on a topic of the most tremendous importance, which seems to be principally destructive in the suggestions it offers. The bias of Mr. Stephen's mind is apparent, and yet it must be admitted that he has fairly raised a question which all thinking people are bound to meet. I may be well excused for referring to this article in this place, because it certainly raised considerable attention, and provoked discussion which has not always been as charitable as it might be. A newspaper has recently been started called the 'Broad Churchman,' and to the guiding spirits of that publication, I respectfully invite a deeper consideration of Mr. Stephen's paper. A more telling attack upon their position it is impossible to conceive. The Broad Churchmen were once happily described by Mr. Disraeli as 'nebulous professors.' Mr. Stephen has now directly challenged them to state clearly what they do believe, and what they do not believe. He shows very intelligibly how weak is the position of those quasi-theologians who delight to describe Christianity as a merely 'moral system,' independent of all dogmatic belief. Such a position, he argues, in effect, is of itself immoral, and incapable of standing any searching test. 'Christianity,' he says, 'as it is understood by Ultramontanes, or by ultra-Protestants, implies a body of beliefs of unspeakable importance to the world.

They may be true, or they may be false, but they cannot be set aside as perfectly indifferent. Man is or is not placed here for a brief interval which is to decide his happiness or his misery throughout all eternity. His situation does or does not depend upon his allegiance to the Church, or upon his undergoing a certain spiritual change. Christ came or did not come from God, and died or did not die to reconcile man to his Maker. An infidel is a man who accepts the negative of these propositions; a Christian is one who takes the affirmative; an unsectarian Christian, if he has any belief at all, is one who says that they may or may not be true, and that it does not much matter. If that is a roundabout way of expressing agreement with the infidel, the statement is intelligible, though its sincerity is questionable. But, taking it literally, it is surely the most incredible of all the assertions that a human being can possibly put forward. . . . To proclaim unsectarian Christianity is, in circuitous language, to proclaim that Christianity is dead. . . . Unsectarian Christianity consists in shirking the difficulty without meeting it. . . . Unsectarian means unchristian.'

All thoughtful persons who have carefully followed the course of the Education controversy can scarcely have failed to have seen in what a false position the Nonconformists have placed themselves in making an alliance, offensive and defensive, with the Secularists, any more than they can have escaped the conclusion that the Denominationalists, in insisting upon the mere reading of the Bible, are scarcely candid. The Nonconformists are fully aware that the Church of England is by no means as weak

as many talkers and writers are apt to maintain that it is; and they are well aware that it holds the honourable position in Christendom of having been a truly educating society. Mr. Miall and the Liberationists may chatter as they please, but what would have become of the schools in thousands of English parishes if it had not been for the indefatigable and self-denying efforts of the Established clergy? It is to be feared that the Nonconformists, having considerable power in Parliament, decry religious teaching in schools, not because they are so lavishly fond of education in general, but because they are intolerant of the influence of the Church. If they formed a compact and symmetrical body, we could easily understand their claim to teach a gospel of their own, and their assertion of a right equivalent to that claimed by their formidable antagonist. But as the reason of their existence is based upon the fact that they hold a totally different theory of religious truth, which they believe to be essential to the salvation of mankind, we find considerable difficulty in comprehending why they should desire to eradicate all religious teaching from national schools, and so throw in their lot with the noisy party that do not hesitate to proclaim their antipathy to any religious instruction whatever. Of course, the obvious answer is that such religionists would rather that no Christian training should be given at all, if not sheltered by their own peculiar shibboleths. Is it possible to conceive a more intolerable dogmatising? But then our Broad Church friends step in and say, Let us have the morals of Christianity enforced without any dogma at all. Let us teach our people to be true and pure; dogmas

matter nothing. To this Mr. Leslie Stephen forcibly replies, ' To say that such dogmas matter nothing is to imply that the dogmas are not true. . . . The dogmas are true, or they are immoral. . . . The essence of the (Christian) belief is the belief in the divinity of Christ. But accept that belief; think for a moment of all that it implies; and you must admit that your Christianity becomes dogmatic in the highest degree. . . . Unsectarian Christianity proclaims the love of Christ as our motive, whilst it declines to make up its mind whether Christ was God or man; or endeavours to escape a categorical answer under a cloud of unsubstantial rhetoric. But the difference between God and man is infinite; and no effusion of superlatives will disguise the plain fact from honest minds. To be a Christian, in any real sense, you must start from a dogma of the most tremendous kind; and an undogmatic creed is as senseless as a statue without shape, or a picture without colour.'

But however the starting of the question, *Are we Christians?* may affect the Education controversy, we cannot deny that it has a far wider application. We may well stand amazed at the reflection that after nineteen centuries of humanising teaching and daily-advancing civilisation the highest ingenuity of man is still employed in inventing the deadliest weapons by means of which human life may be destroyed. The eager speculations of religious controversy fade into nothing beside this terrible fact; sermons and polemical discussions are absolutely silenced in the presence of the last new iron-clad and the latest-born Woolwich Infant. We have no need to travel into clerical disputes,

ecclesiastical prosecutions, or educational animosities; it is enough to contemplate the gigantic military organisation of civilised Europe, and to gasp out, Are we Christians?

But holiday-time has come again, and such gloomy thoughts should now find no place. We wake each morning with a sensation of light-heartedness which we can only account for by remembering that for a brief period at least we are to be released from our daily toil, and are going to enjoy ourselves in perfect liberty, untormented by perpetual posts, unvexed by domestic difficulties, and unworried by professional and official anxieties. For six weeks, at all events, black care shall not ride behind us. Be it that we are going with Mr. Cook, are making one of a reading-party—be it that our recess happens to be our honeymoon, or be it that we are going all solitary, bent on a geological survey of a particular Alpine peak, so long as we are honest folk, we look forward with intense pleasure to our annual relaxation. I own to feeling very sorry for those persons—envied by idiots only—whose life is one long holiday. How they must pine for work! How they must wish there was something worth a struggle in existence! How direfully weary they must get of a perpetual round of what they once called enjoyment and pleasure, all which they now regard as utter boredom! It is all very well to be born with a silver spoon in your mouth, but it is much better to have to find your own victuals than to be perpetually pro-

vided with a superfluity of pap. Of course work is hard—everybody says so—and in these days everybody finds his chief pleasure in complaining that he is overworked. Ah! it's the people who can't get work who have the chief reason to complain. The underworked man is never half so lively as the conventionally overworked. No doubt there are some men whose physical powers are unfortunately unequal to their mental energies; still, it may be doubted whether they would not feel their physical disadvantages much more if their minds were not perpetually occupied. The fact is the busy man has no time to be ill. His thoughts are not constantly occupied with the state of his stomach, nor has he many seconds to spare for contemplation of his tongue or consideration of his pulse. The idle or underworked man finds too many opportunities for doing nothing, or gorging himself with heavy luncheons; and there are few things more fatal to equanimity and general contentedness than a large lunch. Such a meal induces somnolency at an important period of the day; it is persuasive of indolence and lassitude; and, worse than all, it prevents all healthy appetite for that most social and enjoyable of meals, dinner.

Is it not delightful, after months of toil amid the busy roar of the town, in the smoky atmosphere and foul gas of London, to look forward to the moor, the trout stream, and the Alpine snows? Can Mr. Morris's 'Earthly Paradise' (I haven't read it) offer us higher joys than these?

FREE LANCE.



Drawn by A. H. Wall.]

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